



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
March 17, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

MINUTES

The Regular meeting of the Council was held on Tuesday, March 17, @ 7 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Fergusson, D/M Keizer, Cr. Benwell, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Karasiuk, Cr. Bathe, Cr. Tuckey, Cr. Cox, and Cr. Couvrette

Regrets:

Staff Present: Jim Hood, Senior Administrative Officer
Raveena Brown, Executive Secretary
Sam Stokell, Acting Director of Community Services
Andrew Grenier, Director of Municipal Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Cr. Tuckey confirms quorum and reads the Acknowledgment of First Nations.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

26-039

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

PASSED

3. DELEGATIONS

Monthly Policing Report – RCMP

Constable Scott Ewing reported that he is currently acting in the role of Corporal and referenced his previous meeting with Council the prior month. He noted a significant decrease in calls for service, with 67 calls recorded this month compared to 112 during the same period last year, representing nearly a 50 percent reduction. He also highlighted decreases in specific occurrences, including approximately five fewer files per member and about 15 fewer incidents related to disturbances or causing a disturbance.

Despite ongoing staffing shortages, Constable Ewing advised that members have been consistently on patrol, which may have contributed to the reduced call volume. He also shared that the previous week's community activities were well attended and that policing demands remained low over that period, allowing members to participate more actively.

Constable Ewing confirmed that the detachment continues to monitor and manage known prolific offenders through regular weekly checks and indicated that this approach is working well. He concluded by noting that there has been no update regarding the anticipated arrival of a new detachment commander, despite a follow-up email sent approximately 10 days prior, and he will provide further information once it becomes available.

Cr. Karasiuk asked about the current staffing levels and if we have gained any new members, referencing the previous conversation of 2.5 members. Constable Ewing advised that there are currently no updates. He noted that one member from Fort Resolution is expected to arrive in May, which would increase staffing by one. He also indicated that discussions are ongoing with the division regarding the potential recruitment of an additional member.



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Mayor Fergusson noted that, according to the report, there were two incidents during the month where members were required to remain at the hospital to provide guard for individuals related to mental health matters. She inquired about the amount of time officers are typically required to stay on such calls.

Constable Ewing explained that the duration of hospital guard duties varies depending on the situation. If a physician determines that an individual must be admitted and transported to Yellowknife, the call can extend significantly, sometimes up to 12 hours, depending on medevac availability and travel time.

He noted that in one instance, members were at the hospital for approximately eight hours before being relieved by other officers, who may have remained for several additional hours. Another occurrence lasted about six hours. He added that extended guard times are often necessary when the individual poses a risk of leaving or becoming violent toward hospital staff.

Cr. Benwell noted that if the safe room were functional, it would take some of the demand off of the RCMP members.

Mayor Fergusson noted that there are individuals in the community who have prior training as guards, including those who previously worked at the male correctional facility. She asked whether those trained individuals could be called upon in situations like this to support operations and allow officers to continue focusing on their primary duties. Constable Ewing noted that he will follow up with that.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Regular Meeting of Council March 3rd, 2026

26-040

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 3rd, 2026, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

7. ADMINISTRATION

- a. Community Services
i. Director's Report

Samantha Stokell, Acting Director of Community Services, provided a monthly update highlighting strong community participation across programs and events. She noted that the Recreation Centre staff successfully co-hosted the NWT Senior Curling Tournament and the NWT Snowboarding Territorial Championships, both drawing visitors to the community. Regular programming at the gym and arena continued with increased participation, and additional ice time was arranged for Arctic Winter Games athletes.

She reported that the pool remains closed for maintenance but is expected to reopen March 30, with the sauna continuing to see steady use. Library programming was slightly reduced due to staff attending the NWT Literacy Council Conference, though teen nights and special events remained well attended.



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Stokell also shared that daycare and after-school programs experienced high demand and attendance, with continued waitlists and upcoming spots being filled in infant care in the fall. Recruitment is ongoing across several service areas.

In economic and tourism development, she highlighted the success of the “Love Local” shopping campaign and efforts to promote Fort Smith as a tourism destination, including participation in the Whooping Crane Festival. She also noted strong engagement with tourism-related social media content, helping to raise awareness of the community

Mayor Fergusson thanked Sam for her enthusiastic and thorough presentation, noting it was engaging and well delivered. She clarified that the tourism video was produced by TLC as part of a marketing initiative, not by herself.

Mayor Fergusson then raised a question regarding the reported elimination of the librarian position in Hay River, asking what impact that may have on the regional headquarters and whether there could be implications or opportunities for Fort Smith, including potential reallocation of resources or additional information on the situation.

Samantha Stokell explained that the NWT Public Library system is headquartered in Hay River, in the same building where the Hay River Centennial Public Library operates. She noted that the current librarian is retiring after 20 years, and there are plans to restructure the model.

Sam advised that, similar to changes made in Fort Smith's library, the GNWT previously held the Hay River librarian position while other staff were supported through a local board. Moving forward, the intent is for the Town of Hay River to take over management of the library. She added that there is no additional funding available, and the existing funds allocated for the head librarian position will instead be directed to the Town of Hay River to support this new structure.

b. Municipal Services

i. Director's Report

Director Grenier provided a brief operational update across several areas.

He reported that the pool repairs are complete, systems are running, and water temperatures are stabilizing. Chemical treatment is expected shortly, and there is a possibility the pool could reopen earlier than the planned March 30 date, pending further discussion.

He noted that work on equipment and systems is largely complete, with only final remote programming and software setup remaining. Solid waste operations are running as expected, with future discussions planned around service adjustments and staff transitions.

At the water treatment plant, efforts are underway to source materials needed for filter repairs, including looking beyond the community for stainless steel components.

He also mentioned ongoing snow management challenges, with consideration being given to widening some streets where snow buildup has narrowed roadways, though this may require adjusting priorities.

Mayor Fergusson thanked Director Grenier for the update on the new garbage truck, cans, and overall rollout. She asked when the public communication and education materials, including a PSA, will be shared with the community to provide advance notice and explain



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the changes, noting the importance of preparing residents so they are not caught off guard. She acknowledged that this appears to be the next phase of the project.

Director Grenier noted that next steps are pending the outcome of tonight's briefing. If it is not approved, timelines will need to be adjusted accordingly, with focus remaining on the critical path.

He added that planning is already underway, including coordination with Daniel, and that information will be shared in stages. Communications will be rolled out gradually to build awareness and begin engaging the community as the project progresses.

Mayor Fergusson raised the ongoing concern regarding the hot tub at the pool, noting it is a frequent topic in the community. She asked whether staff training and coordination are currently underway to ensure proper management of chemical levels, and emphasized the importance of communication between pool staff and operations staff to support more consistent and reliable hot tub service.

Director Grenier advised that the pool is being sanded, painted, and prepared for reopening, with work being carried out by staff. He also noted that two staff members have recently completed facilities and pool training, adding to overall staff capacity and expertise.

Cr. Karasiuk asked for additional details regarding the curling rink ice plant, specifically why it has been requiring manual restarts every six hours. He inquired whether the issue had been resolved, what caused the problem, and requested further clarification.

Director Grenier explained that the issue was related to power fluctuations caused by work on the dam and generator failures. He noted that since those issues were addressed, the system has been operating normally. He added that a significant power surge was believed to be the cause of the earlier disruptions.

ii. Briefing Note: Purchase of Garbage Bins and RFID System

26-041

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson
Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Mayor and Council approve the purchase of residential garbage bins, RFID hardware, and associated setup, assembly, delivery, and initial software implementation from Superior North America Inc. through the Canoe Procurement Group in the total amount of \$214,507.22 dollars before GST, to be funded from the approved garbage truck capital project budget.

PASSED

Cr. Couvrette sought clarification, asking if this project will include the residents who live out at Bell Rock. Director Grenier confirmed that they will be included.

Director Grenier noted that each household will receive one bin, and additional bins can be purchased at the owner's expense.

Cr. Karasiuk asked whether the schematics displaying the Fort Smith logo reflect a finalized design, or if they were simply illustrative examples of what could be included. Director Grenier confirmed that it was the decision that was decided on.

Cr. Cox asked for more information on the RFID system or the option that was decided on, including an estimated annual subscription cost. He also requested clarification on what functionality the RFID tags provide beyond simply identifying and tracing bins to specific users.



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Director Grenier advised that the estimated annual cost for the RFID system is approximately \$5,000, depending on the number of devices and services required.

He explained that the system will track when bins are collected, support route optimization, and allow operators to document issues such as contamination or blocked access using photos. It will also enable bins to be traced back to specific addresses and reassigned if needed, improving overall efficiency and accountability in waste collection.

Cr. Cox acknowledged that while the proposed approach is the right direction, it may generate public pushback, with Council likely responding to concerns. He emphasized the importance of clearly communicating the benefits, including improved efficiency, cost savings, and the ability to reallocate staff to other priorities.

He noted that although things appear to be progressing smoothly so far, Council should be prepared for potential challenges and ensure the rollout and messaging are handled carefully to avoid negative outcomes.

Cr. Heaton noted that it may be early in the process but asked how the transition from the current wooden bins will be handled. She inquired whether the Town will assist with removing them or if disposal will be addressed through programs such as the spring or fall clean-up.

Director Grenier advised that the current plan is to address the old wooden bins as part of the spring clean-up. He added that upcoming public communications will also include suggestions for repurposing the bins, such as using them for flower boxes, storage, or other community-oriented uses, to encourage alternatives to disposal.

A concern was brought up regarding steep ditches at the end of people's driveways, and it was noted that the garbage bin just needs to be placed at the end of the driveway to be picked up then can be moved out of the way.

8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

a. Bylaws and Policies

i. Third and Final Reading of the 2026 Annual Borrowing Bylaw No. 1075

# 26-042	Moved by: Cr. Cox Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson
That the 2026 Annual Borrowing Bylaw No. 1075 be given third and final reading by title only.	
PASSED	

b. Mayor and Council Round Table

- i. Cr. Cox reported that there have been few official meetings recently. He attended a Canadian Nuclear Laboratories presentation on nuclear site reclamation and noted that the work appears well organized, with ongoing activity expected this summer, particularly around the Old Bell Rock area.

He also shared that the Fort Smith Loppet was successful and well received by the



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community. He added that the Fort Smith Fishing Derby is another upcoming local event.

- ii. Cr. Couvrette had nothing to report.
- iii. Cr. Benwell commended the organizers of the Frolics event, noting they did an excellent job and that the event was well-received by the community. She highlighted the fashion show as a standout moment, describing it as particularly enjoyable and well done.
- iv. Cr. Heaton shared that she assisted with scorekeeping at the Joel Tetso Memorial Hockey Tournament and suggested considering improvements to the score box, such as adding a foot heater, for future budgets.

She also highlighted the success of the youth Northern Games, noting strong participation and support from volunteers. Overall, she described the Frolics events as very successful and well attended.

- v. Cr. Karasiuk extended seasonal greetings and shared updates from recent community activities. He noted that the seniors group hosted a coffee and muffin morning during the territorial curling playdowns and is planning an upcoming themed lunch open to both members and non-members.

He highlighted his involvement in Frolics events, including the dog mushing races, which were well-received despite initial snow challenges. He also spoke on behalf of the Mayor and Council at the Big Fun Snowboarding event, praising both the facility and the organizers, and noting strong community participation and enjoyment.

- vi. Cr. Bathe expressed his congratulations to the AWG athletes and noted that the Loppet trail was great.
- vii. D/M Keizer shared updates on several community activities and projects. He noted that work related to the Northern transportation route will involve hazmat crews, so residents may notice unusual activity in the Bell Rock area during cleanup efforts, which he described as a positive and necessary project.

He highlighted the success of the recent Frolics events, including strong participation in children's games and high community engagement. He also mentioned the well-attended hockey tournament, though he was unable to attend all events due to illness.

Looking ahead, he promoted the upcoming Fort Smith skating carnival, encouraging residents to attend and enjoy the performances, community atmosphere, and family-friendly activities.

- viii. Mayor Fergusson expressed that she was pleased to hear how successful recent community events were, noting she missed participating but was glad they went well.

She shared highlights from her time in Whitehorse, where she volunteered as mission staff for Team NT, supporting badminton and cross-country skiing. She



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described the experience as rewarding, emphasizing strong sportsmanship, meaningful connections across circumpolar communities, and impressive athletic achievements, including record-breaking performances by Team NT in speed skating.

She also commented positively on Fort Smith's arena compared to others, noting it is more comfortable for spectators.

Looking ahead, she mentioned an upcoming leadership meeting with the MLA and encouraged residents to attend and support the Community Services Fair at the Aurora Campus on the 25th.

- ix. Cr. Tuckey extended his personal congratulations to all organizers of the Winter Festival, noting its success across all areas. He recognized the significant hard work and dedication involved and stated that these efforts are greatly appreciated by the community.

9. PROCLAMATIONS

10. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate)	April 14 th , 2026, @ 7 pm, chaired by Cr. Heaton
Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal)	April 28 th , 2026, @ 7 pm

11. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

12. QUESTION PERIOD

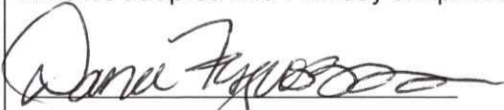
13. ADJOURNMENT

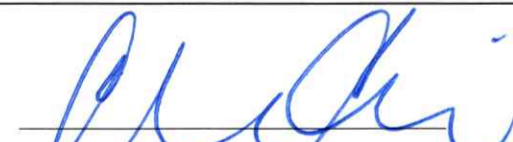
26-043 **Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk**
 Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the meeting be adjourned at 7:43 pm.

PASSED

Minutes adopted this 14th day of April 2026.


Dana Fergusson
Mayor


Certified Correct by Cassandra Gibbons
Senior Administrative Officer

