



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

MINUTES

The Regular meeting of the Council was held on Tuesday, April 14, @ 7 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Fergusson, D/M Keizer, Cr. Benwell, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Bathe, Cr. Cox, and Cr. Couvrette
Regrets: Cr. Karasiuk and Cr. Tuckey
Staff Present: Cassandra Gibbons, Acting Senior Administrative Officer
Raveena Brown, Executive Secretary
Adam McNab, Director of Protective Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Mayor Fergusson confirms quorum, reads the Acknowledgment of First Nations, and hands the chair to Cr. Heaton.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

26-044

Moved by: Cr. Cox
Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

PASSED

3. DELEGATIONS

Monthly Policing Report – RCMP

Constable Martinussen introduced himself as a temporary member assigned to the Fort Smith detachment, noting he has been in the community for one week and will remain for another week before Corporal Brett Little returns on March 27 to resume regular duties. He reported a decrease in calls for service in March, with 99 occurrences, approximately 50 fewer than the same period last year, which may be partly attributed to several prolific offenders being removed from the community. He highlighted the detachment’s strong community policing efforts, including participation in local events, school visits, youth programming, and recreational activities, and noted this level of engagement is commendable despite staffing challenges. With respect to policing priorities, there was minimal substance-related activity, with only one reported drug trafficking file and no search warrants executed. There were three files related to violence and intimate partner situations, two of which resulted in charges now before the court. He also noted that one prolific offender was charged for breaching conditions related to intimate partner violence and taken into custody. Constable Martinussen advised that additional details are available in the report.

Mayor Fergusson asked what the current staffing numbers in town are.

Constable Martinussen advised that he does not have the exact number of officers currently staffed. He noted that, at present, there are only two officers in the community, himself and one other. He added that several officers are on vacation and are expected to return within the next week, while others are currently on ODS.

Constable Martinussen also shared that, based on information from Brett, a new detachment manager is expected to arrive in May. He acknowledged the frustration surrounding current staffing levels, both within the community and among officers, noting



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

that the current workload, including being on call around the clock, is very demanding. He stated that efforts are underway to improve the situation and that conditions are expected to improve in the near future.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Regular Meeting of Council March 17th, 2026

26-045

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Cr. Benwell

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 17th, 2026, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

7. ADMINISTRATION

- a. Protective Services

- i. Director's Report

Director McNab provided a summary of Protective Services activities, noting that Fire and Ambulance responded to 22 calls during the reporting period, which is below average. He highlighted the completion of an EMR course, resulting in eight new EMR medics for the ambulance department, and expressed appreciation for the volunteers involved.

He advised that recruitment for the Protective Services Coordinator role is ongoing, with hopes to finalize the process shortly. Procurement planning is underway, pending capital budget approval, including work toward a new dispatch system and updated fire software.

Director McNab reported that a comprehensive civic addressing review is in progress to support future dispatch and 911 services. In collaboration with the GNWT Geomatics department, a new GIS layer is being developed to cover the entire community, including Salt River First Nations and nearby lands, which will be shared with dispatch services.

He noted increased reporting on business licensing, now including a three-year snapshot of new licenses, renewals, and outstanding renewals, while cautioning that 2026 figures may appear lower due to late renewals.

Bylaw Enforcement has been active, with increased concerns related to animal and traffic control. Officers are continuing enforcement and community engagement efforts in response to these issues.

In Emergency Management, preparations are underway for the 2026 wildfire season, including updates to the emergency management plan and coordination with MACA and other partners. Public engagement is planned once further coordination with ECC is complete.

Director McNab concluded by noting that capital project updates remain largely unchanged from the previous month.



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

ii. Briefing Note: DPA-007-26 Corwin's Painting & More

26-046

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That DPA-007-26, submitted by Corwin Hann - Corwin's Painting & More, to operate a painting and renovations business, from Lot 870, Plan 837, 24 Tamarac Cr., Fort Smith, be approved.

PASSED

iii. Briefing Note: DPA-008-26 Northern Lights Catering Company

26-047

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That DPA-008-26, submitted by Allison Courtney – Northern Lights Catering Company, to conduct the desk operations for a catering services business, from Lot 2, Plan 285, 5 Peregrine St., Fort Smith, be approved.

PASSED

iv. Briefing Note: DPA-009-26 Neapetung Contracting

26-048

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: D/M Keizer

That DPA-009-26, submitted by Arnold Neapetung – Neapetung Contracting, to operate a contracting business, from Lot 1618, Plan 2895, 27 Wandering Spirit St., Fort Smith, be approved.

PASSED

v. Briefing Note: DPA-010-26 For the Love of Beading

26-049

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: D/M Keizer

That DPA-010-26, submitted by Shawna Kendi-McDonald – For the Love of Beading, to operate a beading business, from Lot 536, Plan 272, 116 Woodbison Ave., Fort Smith, be approved.

PASSED

vi. Briefing Note: DPA-011-26 Linaker Enterprises Inc.

26-050

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Cr. Benwell

That DPA-011-26, submitted by Beckie Linaker – Linaker Enterprises Inc., to conduct a property management and janitorial services business, from Lot 878, Plan 837, 56 Tamarac Cr., Fort Smith, be approved.

PASSED

vii. Briefing Note: DPA-012-26 AAG Landscaping

26-051

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That DPA-012-26, submitted by Amanda Grenier – AAG Landscaping, to operate a landscaping business, from Lot 961, Plan 1260, 60 Field St., Fort Smith, be approved.

PASSED



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

viii. Briefing Note: DPA-013-26 Andon's Dad Plumbing

26-052

Moved by: D/M Keizer

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That DPA-013-26, submitted by Levi MacDonald – Andon's Dad Plumbing, to conduct a plumbing and heating business, from Lot 787, Plan 490, 31 Tamarac Cr., Fort Smith, be approved.

PASSED

b. Corporate Services

i. Director's Report

Director Gibbons reported that Corporate Services had a number of key activities during the month. She noted that the annual audit fieldwork was completed with representatives from Avery Cooper, who provided positive feedback on the Town's financial practices and audit process. Final audited financial statements are still pending but are expected shortly.

She advised that the Town has received its 2026 insurance documentation, which has been distributed internally for fleet registration purposes and will also be shared with banking and funding partners, including the GNWT and Community Services programs.

Director Gibbons highlighted the successful onboarding of the new payroll staff member, who recently completed her first independent payroll cycle. She noted the employee has integrated well into the team and is performing strongly.

She also reported that HR launched organization-wide training focused on workplace respect and team building, delivered by a facilitator from Aurora College. Feedback from the initial session was positive, with further sessions to be refined and improved.

Director Gibbons added that she supported Protective Services in the recruitment process for a new position, noting a strong pool of candidates. She further advised that Corporate Services participated in an information session with benefits provider representatives to better understand employee benefit programs, and that additional support will be made available to union members who require clarification on their benefits.

D/M Keizer thanked Director Gibbons for the report and noted an ongoing concern raised by both himself and the Mayor regarding advisory boards. He suggested that Corporate Services consider including a regular update on advisory boards within monthly reporting, as information is not consistently brought forward.

He indicated that a dedicated section outlining current activities and progress would help keep Council informed and address questions from community members who have previously served on these boards. He clarified that this was a suggestion for consideration rather than a formal request.

Mayor Fergusson advised that she had circulated information on the current status of the advisory boards. She noted that, as each board falls under a specific department, it may be most effective for updates to be included within each Director's regular report where applicable.

She also highlighted that Council representation exists on each advisory board and suggested that the assigned Councillor provide updates during meetings. This approach would help ensure Council and the public remain informed about the work of the advisory boards.



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

Mayor Fergusson explained that advisory boards had previously lost direction and were meeting without a clear purpose or defined outcomes. She noted that the current focus is on re-establishing clear mandates and ensuring each board has meaningful work and expectations.

She emphasized the importance of guidance from Directors to help define priorities and ensure that board members understand their role and the value of their contributions before meetings take place.

Cr. Couvrette noted that, based on recent reporting, there has been limited activity from the Bylaw Review Committee. He acknowledged current workload pressures but requested that, within the next month, an update be provided to committee members outlining the status of the bylaw review process, including upcoming priorities and which bylaws are next for review.

Director Gibbons confirmed that an update can be provided to the committee. She noted that several bylaws and a policy are scheduled for first and second reading that evening, which will help advance the review process.

She added that she is newly involved with the Bylaw Review Committee, having stepped in for Jim, and is currently getting up to speed. Director Gibbons indicated she will ensure she is fully informed moving forward and will support ongoing progress.

ii. Accounts Paid List

iii. Correspondence – none

c. Briefing Note: Consolidation of Contribution Agreements and 2026 Funding Overview

26-053

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Council approve the contribution agreement with MACA for the fiscal year 2026-2027.

PASSED

Cr. Couvrette raised ongoing concerns regarding Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) funding, noting a continued shortfall despite recent changes to consolidate funding agreements. He questioned whether recent increases are keeping pace with inflation and cost-of-living pressures, expressing doubt that they are sufficient.

He emphasized that limited funding makes it increasingly difficult for communities to maintain expected service levels, particularly as responsibilities continue to be shifted from the Government of the Northwest Territories to municipalities. He suggested that municipalities should continue to advocate collectively for improved funding and urged the GNWT to address disparities, particularly for smaller communities outside of Yellowknife and Inuvik, to ensure they can sustain and improve essential services.

Director Gibbons apologized for misunderstanding the initial question regarding funding and advised that she will provide a detailed breakdown of funding comparisons. She noted that funding levels are likely not keeping pace with inflation, but will confirm this with additional information.

She further explained that recent budget development involved careful consideration of financial constraints, with an effort to balance service needs while avoiding excessive tax



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

increases for residents. As a result, the Town is preparing to operate within tighter funding limits and will take a more cautious and responsible approach to spending, particularly in light of potential shortfalls.

- d. Briefing Note: Appointment of Acting Senior Administrative Officer (SAO) April 11- May 3, 2026

26-054

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council appoint Cassandra Gibbons as Acting Senior Administrative Officer for the period of April 11– May 3, 2026, in accordance with the Senior Administrative Officer Establishment Bylaw No. 1071.

PASSED

- e. Briefing Note: Water and Sewer Comprehensive Assessment, Needs Analysis and Strategic Planning Report

26-055

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

That Council accept the 2026 Fort Smith Water and Sewer Comprehensive Assessment, Needs Analysis and Strategic Planning Report.

PASSED

Cr. Cox noted that the report was comprehensive and appreciated having multiple documents consolidated in one place, though he suggested providing a searchable digital version for easier reference.

He raised concerns regarding the lagoon, highlighting that while it may meet certain territorial requirements, it does not comply with the Northwest Territories Public Health Act. He pointed out that approximately 17 properties fall within the restricted distance, and emphasized that this, along with slope stability and odour impacts, should be considered in future planning. He also noted the likely need for improved wastewater treatment in the future.

Cr. Couvrette noted that the report is highly detailed and complex, making it difficult to fully interpret within a short timeframe. He suggested holding an informal working session for interested Council members to review the findings in plain language and discuss next steps.

He emphasized the need for long-term planning, particularly for water and sewer infrastructure, noting that decisions should consider a 20 to 30 year horizon. He also raised the importance of planning for potential population growth and ensuring the community has the infrastructure and services needed to support future development.

Cr. Couvrette added that these discussions should include other community partners and local governments, as their involvement will play a significant role in supporting and shaping the community's future growth.

Director Gibbons advised that she met briefly with Director Grenier earlier in the day to discuss the report. She noted that, as the report was only recently received, he is still in the process of reviewing and digesting its contents.

She indicated that Director Grenier intends to use the report to help guide next steps and is currently reassessing priorities and planning for the coming months. He is making adjustments to improve processes based on the detailed information provided.



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

Director Gibbons added that Director Grenier is very supportive of the report and views it positively, noting his strong interest in the findings and their application to ongoing infrastructure work.

Cr. Couvrette emphasized the need for the community to act quickly in pursuing upcoming infrastructure funding opportunities, including newly announced federal funding. He noted that the report provides strong support and justification for funding applications, particularly for water and wastewater projects, and stressed the importance of being prepared to compete for available resources.

**Cr. Heaton transferred the chair to Cr. Benwell at 7:43 pm*

Cr. Heaton expressed interest in participating in a site review to better understand the condition and deterioration of existing infrastructure. She acknowledged that aging infrastructure is a broader issue across Canada but noted concerns related to local water licensing requirements and compliance, including areas where current standards are not being met.

She emphasized the importance of having time to fully review and understand the report, and supported the idea of follow-up sessions in plain language to help Council and the community better interpret the findings. She also raised concerns about population projections included in the report, noting they may not align with current trends.

Director Gibbons clarified that the Town has taken the necessary steps to renew its water licence. She advised that the required fee was submitted to the consultant ahead of the deadline, and that Andrew has been working with them to confirm all materials were filed on time. She noted that, in the absence of any updates to the contrary, it is expected that the renewal process is proceeding as required.

**Chair transferred back to Cr. Heaton at 7:46 pm*

f. Briefing Note: Capital Plan

26-056

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

That Council receive the Capital Planning Report as presented and provide direction as desired regarding capital priorities.

PASSED

Cr. Couvrette acknowledged the focus on infrastructure in upcoming priorities but emphasized that economic development should be elevated to a top priority. He suggested moving away from a traditional strategy and instead developing a practical economic development action plan focused on achievable short, medium, and long-term opportunities.

He highlighted the urgency of preparing for potential economic growth tied to major projects in the NWT, noting that without a clear plan, the community risks missing out on these opportunities. He stressed the need to act quickly to support growth, strengthen the local economy, and enhance overall community well-being.

Cr. Benwell expressed concern about the loss of services and opportunities in Fort Smith, including changes to the college and other closures, noting it creates a sense of decline in the community. She emphasized the need for a strong economic plan to help reverse this trend and support growth, adding that if the goal is to increase the population, the community must be prepared to build and develop accordingly.



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

Mayor Fergusson noted that many items listed under Priority 1 and 2 have already been completed, initiated, or are in progress, and expects the list will shorten as work continues. She indicated that this may allow lower-priority items to move up.

She agreed with Councillor Couvrette that economic development should be elevated in priority and suggested it be moved up as higher-priority items are completed.

Director Gibbons clarified that an economic development strategy already exists but is currently expired, and the intent would be to update it rather than create a new document. She explained that the strategy is designed to set broad goals, supported by an existing framework, rather than provide detailed action items.

She noted that some past goals were general in nature and could benefit from clearer direction in the update. She welcomed input from Council and the community to help refine priorities and identify meaningful goals. She also highlighted that both small initiatives and larger objectives can contribute to positive economic outcomes, and that feedback will help strengthen the revised strategy moving forward.

D/M Keizer noted that the recently announced major national projects are not currently reflected in existing plans, and cautioned that without strategic alignment, the community risks missing out on potential benefits. He acknowledged that while some developments may not directly impact Fort Smith, there are opportunities in areas such as education, training, and workforce development.

He emphasized the importance of positioning the community now to take advantage of these opportunities and suggested a stronger focus on people-centered initiatives to support long-term growth.

Cr. Cox indicated he is generally satisfied with the current plan but noted capacity constraints as a key consideration. He suggested maintaining the plan as is for now, with a commitment to revisit it in a few months once the new SAO is in place.

He also requested additional detail on some of the priority items, particularly those related to infrastructure, and asked whether a more detailed briefing document could be provided to support future discussions.

g. Briefing Note: Appointment of members to the Board of Revisions

26-057

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

That Council appoint John Gray, Denise Yuhas, and Marie Elle Piche as members of the Board of Revision for the 2026 taxation year.

PASSED

8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

a. Bylaws

- i. Briefing Note: Amended Rates and Fees Bylaw No. 1076
- ii. Consolidated Rates and Fees Bylaw No. 1076

26-058

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That the Consolidated Rates and Fees Bylaw No.1076 be given first reading by title only.

PASSED



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

Cr. Cox sought clarification regarding landfill fees, noting that his understanding is that residential users are not charged drop-off fees. He asked that this be clearly confirmed, as he recalled seeing this information but was unable to locate it again.

D/M Keizer clarified that he was able to confirm the correct information, noting that residential garbage is free to dispose of at the landfill when it is properly secured.

**Cr. Heaton transferred the chair to Cr. Benwell at 8:04 pm*

Cr. Heaton asked whether the figures presented for the new animal control bylaw reflect the proposed increases, or if they are preliminary estimates.

Director McNab advised that the fee changes outlined in the document have been incorporated into the draft Animal Control Bylaw. He noted that the finalized bylaw will be brought forward for Council consideration once it has completed a legal review to ensure it is enforceable if required.

Cr. Heaton sought clarification regarding sponsorships in the Consolidated Rates and Fees bylaw. Director Gibbons advised that the sponsorship and donation section was not updated as part of the bylaw review. She explained that it was determined this area requires a more focused discussion and should be addressed separately.

She noted that, given the importance of sponsorship and donations, including interest previously expressed by Mayor Fergusson, Administration intends to revisit this section through a separate process or document at a later date.

Cr. Heaton expressed support for the waiver of burial fees for seniors in both winter and summer, and requested confirmation that families are still required to purchase the burial plot, with only the burial fees being waived. Director Gibbons confirmed.

**Chair transferred back to Cr. Heaton at 8:08 pm*

iii. Consolidated Rates and Fees Bylaw No. 1076

26-058

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That the Consolidated Rates and Fees Bylaw No.1076 be given second reading by title only.

PASSED

b. Policies

i. Briefing Note: Respectful Workplace and Harassment Policy

26-059

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: D/M Keizer

That Council approve the Respectful Workplace Policy as presented.

PASSED

ii. Council Procedures Policy

26-060

Moved by: Cr. Couvrette

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council approve the Council Procedures Policy as presented.

PASSED



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

c. Mayor and Council Round Table

- i. Cr. Karasiuk was excused
- ii. Cr. Bathe noted that he did not have anything to add, and is just looking forward to returning to Fort Smith tomorrow.
- iii. D/M Keizer noted that he will be attending the FCM conference in June.
- iv. Mayor Fergusson provided an update on recent activities since the last meeting on March 17. She highlighted a meeting with leadership from the Town, including the MLA, where productive discussions focused on community priorities and opportunities for joint advocacy.

She noted that the Bylaw Review Committee met to discuss rates, fees, and upcoming bylaws, including animal control. She also attended the college community services fair, which showcased a wide range of local organizations and saw strong community engagement.

Mayor Fergusson further participated in a territorial working group with mayors, SAOs, and other representatives to discuss improving federal leadership and coordination during emergency responses. She advised that this engagement is expected to contribute to updates to the Northwest Territories Emergency Management Act, with follow-up discussions planned.

She also met with the mayors of Inuvik and Yellowknife to strengthen collaboration, particularly around shared priorities such as the college, with the goal of presenting a unified voice on key issues.

Mayor Fergusson added that she hosted a “Word on the Street” engagement session on April 2, which was well attended and generated significant feedback from residents on topics including advisory boards, water, and other community concerns. She plans to hold another session in the evening to increase participation.

She concluded by acknowledging the work of the Acting SAO and noting that recruitment for the permanent position is ongoing.

- v. Cr. Tuckey was excused
- vi. Cr. Cox noted there was limited new information to report, as no recent Housing Advisory Committee meeting had taken place. He highlighted an upcoming meeting focused on accessibility, where several approvals are expected that could support development and community growth.

He also reminded Council of the upcoming trade show on April 25, noting it is typically a well-attended event.

- vii. Cr. Couvrette encouraged residents to attend the upcoming trade show, noting that the Town will have a booth in place. He added that Protective Services is expected to have a dedicated area to engage with the public on emergency preparedness and related topics, and expressed appreciation for this outreach.



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
April 14, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

- viii. Cr. Benwell noted that SRFN will have a table at the trade show and encouraged the community to attend the event.
- ix. Cr. Heaton noted she has had limited availability over the past month while caring for her father and thanked Bryce Young for stepping in to support the lunch program at the Friendship Centre.

She shared that the Fort Smith Métis Council election is scheduled for May 2 and encouraged members to participate. She also highlighted that the animal shelter is seeking volunteers for evening coverage in April and encouraged residents to assist, particularly as activity is expected to increase with warmer weather.

9. PROCLAMATIONS

10. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal)	April 28 th , 2026, @ 7 pm Chaired by Cr. Couvrette
Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate)	May 5 th , 2026, @ 7 pm

11. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

# 26-061	Moved by: Mayor Fergusson Seconded by: Cr. Cox
That Cr. Tuckey and Cr. Karasiuk be excused from the Regular Meeting of Council on April 14, 2026.	
PASSED	

12. QUESTION PERIOD

13. ADJOURNMENT

# 26-062	Moved by: Cr. Cox Seconded by: D/M Keizer
That the meeting be adjourned at 8:19 pm.	
PASSED	

Minutes adopted this 28th day of April 2026.	
 Dana Fergusson Mayor	 Certified Correct by Cassandra Gibbons Acting Senior Administrative Officer

