



Council of the Town of Fort Smith

May 19, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

MINUTES

The Regular meeting of Council was held on
Tuesday, May 19, @ 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: David Henderson, Senior Administrative Officer
Raveena Brown, Executive Secretary
Lauren Howes, Director of Community Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

26-105

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

PASSED

3. DELEGATIONS

- a. Monthly Poicing Report – RCMP

Sergeant Nathan Jacobsen introduced himself as the new sergeant at the detachment, noting that he had only been in the community for about a week and was still getting to know the town. He acknowledged that Council had likely reviewed the report and highlighted a slight reduction in files this month compared to the same period last year. One notable occurrence in April involved a break-and-enter at a business, where charges were laid.

On a positive note, Sergeant Jacobsen spoke about staffing improvements at the detachment. He advised that he is a newly posted member, a new recruit arrived in town that day and is expected to begin work on Thursday, and arrangements are in place for an experienced member to transfer to Fort Smith, with an anticipated arrival in the first week of June. He added that the additional staffing should help prepare the detachment for what is expected to be a busier summer season as the weather improves.

Cr. Karasiuk asked what the total number of members is in town currently.

Sergeant Jacobsen advised that the detachment will have a fifth member once the new recruit begins, with staffing increasing to six members by June 1. He added that there are also a couple of members currently dealing with medical issues who are gradually working toward returning to full-time duties. While progress is being made, he noted that the return-to-work process is expected to take some time.

D/M Keizer welcomed Sergeant Jacobsen and his family to Fort Smith.



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Cr. Tuckey noted that mental health calls appeared to keep members busy throughout April, referencing the 4 mental health-related occurrences reported during the month.

Mayor Fergusson asked how many of the mental health calls required members to remain outside hospital rooms, noting that doing so takes officers away from responding to other calls for service. Sergeant Jacobsen noted that it was 4 calls.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting of Council May 5th, 2026

26-106

Moved by: Cr. Bathe

Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 5th, 2026, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

b. Special Meeting of Council May 7th, 2026

26-107

Moved by: Cr. Tuckey

Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

That the minutes of the Special Meeting of May 7th, 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

Director Howes reported that Community Services had a busy and successful April, highlighted by the Thebacha Business Development trade show. She noted the event was very well attended, with strong participation from community members and broad representation from the Town of Fort Smith, including Protective Services, Community Services, the library, childcare, and economic and tourism development staff. She shared that 16 new library memberships were created during the event and said staff had many positive conversations with residents about tourism opportunities and community relationships.

Director Howes also noted that the trade show was a great way to wrap up the arena season heading into summer. In aquatics, she reported positive community feedback following the addition of an extra hour of programming. At the library, new glow-in-the-dark filament is now available for 3D printing projects. She added that daycare programming has been going well with the warmer weather and that the daycare waitlist has grown to 22 children.

Mayor Fergusson thanked Director Howes for the report and commended the department for continuing to keep Council informed on community activities and programming. She asked whether the increased pool availability and extended access hours have resulted in greater participation and increased usage numbers.



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Director Howes noted that the current report only reflects April data, and that participation numbers related to the increased pool hours will be available in next month's report.

Mayor Fergusson asked a follow-up question related to the pool, noting that the coordinator staffing numbers had been posted earlier in the day and that there had also been ongoing hot tub issues. She asked whether those issues were being resolved.

Director Howes explained that the chlorination issue earlier in the day appeared to be mechanical in nature. She noted that staff noticed a trend in the readings and shut things down as a precaution to ensure public safety. The issue was addressed quickly, allowing the pool to reopen shortly afterward.

She added that the hot tub issue is also mechanical. Although a replacement part had arrived, additional complications were encountered during installation. Director Howes said contractors are actively working on the issue, and staff are hopeful the hot tub will be reopened soon.

Cr. Karasiuk asked for additional information regarding the internet testing project and requested that staff expand further on the initiative.

Director Howes explained that the internet testing project was led by the Economic and Tourism Development Officer and was intended to gather community feedback and better understand the current standard of internet speeds for the average household in Fort Smith. She noted that the long-term goal is for households to have access to speeds of up to 50 megabytes per second by 2030, and added that the testing project is still ongoing. Director Howes advised that she would be happy to provide Council with more detailed information on the project if requested.

Cr. Heaton gave recognition to the library staff, particularly Michelle, for her positive interactions and book recommendations, noting that she is currently finishing a recommended series. She also shared an idea for a future community chain or art project that could incorporate representation of Indigenous families and local cultural themes, such as the rapids and traditional travel routes.

Cr. Heaton highlighted the strong programming taking place at the library and noted that she recently attended an event there with the Women of the Wilderness Institute, which was very well attended. She also thanked the daycare for bringing children into the library and acknowledged the library for hosting community programming and events.

b. Municipal Services

i. Director's Report

SAO Henderson advised that the Director of Municipal Services was unavailable and out of the office for the meeting. He noted that the report was fairly brief, with the main update being the arrival and distribution of the new garbage carts, which residents may have seen being delivered over the past two days. SAO Henderson added that if Council had any questions regarding the report, administration would take them under advisement and provide responses at a later time.

Cr. Karasiuk noted that he did not expect administration to have the information immediately available, but asked when street cleaning operations are expected to begin, noting that conditions are currently quite dusty. SAO Henderson noted that he will follow up and get back to Council.



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Mayor Fergusson asked whether additional public service announcements or communications are planned regarding the rollout of the new garbage cart system. She questioned whether the information already shared represents the full extent of the campaign, or if residents can expect further updates, such as frequently asked questions, troubleshooting information, and other guidance to help address public concerns and improve understanding of the new system.

Administration noted that they are currently collecting questions and feedback from residents and will continue providing public messaging and updates regarding the new garbage cart program.

Cr. Heaton asked whether the Town would consider providing the initial fill for secondary water tanks for residents in the Bell Rock area and other locations outside of town proper. She noted that the matter had previously been discussed in the fall and suggested that, with fire season approaching and residents beginning gardening activities, it may be beneficial to revisit whether this could be offered as a municipal service. SAO Henderson noted that he will follow up with the Director of Municipal Services.

Cr. Bathe asked whether there is a communication or education process in place for residents who may not place their garbage carts in the correct location or follow the collection guidelines properly. He questioned how residents would be notified of issues and whether staff would be following up directly to help educate residents on proper cart placement and use.

Director Howes noted that the town is going to be doing door hangers with educational information on how to properly manage your garbage collection.

8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

a. Bylaws and Policies

b. Appointments

i. Expression of Interest – CSAB Rohma Nawaz

26-108

Moved by: Cr. Tuckey

Seconded by: D/M Keizer

That Rohma Nawaz be appointed to the Community Services Advisory Board for a two-year term ending May 19, 2028.

PASSED

ii. Expression of Interest – SDAB Jeffery O’Keefe

26-109

Moved by: Cr. Bathe

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Jeffery O’Keefe be appointed to the Sustainable Development Advisory Board for a two-year term ending May 19, 2028.

iii. Expression of Interest – CSAB Allie McDonald

26-110

Moved by: Cr. Heaton

Seconded by: Cr. Karasiuk

That Allie McDonald be appointed to the Community Services Advisory Board for a two-year term ending May 19, 2028.

PASSED



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iv. Expression of Interest – EDAB Kevin Antoniak

26-111

Moved by: D/M Keizer

Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That Kevin Anthoniak be appointed to the Economic and Tourism Development Advisory Board for a two-year term ending May 19, 2028.

PASSED

c. Mayor and Council Round Table

- i. Cr. Couvrette noted that PWK graduation is coming up at the end of next week and extended congratulations to all graduating students. He shared that there are expected to be 21 graduates this year, including two from Phoenix School, and recognized the achievement while wishing all graduates the best in their future endeavours.
- ii. Cr. Benwell extended congratulations to all graduating students and also offered condolences to members of the community who have recently experienced the loss of loved ones.
- iii. Cr. Heaton shared that she continues to assist with the children's lunch program at the Uncle Gabe's Friendship Centre as the school year comes to an end. She also thanked Ria and Julia for welcoming her to assist at Mabel's House.

She acknowledged D/M Keizer, Cr. Benwell and other community members for attending the recent Red Dress tea event at the Friendship Centre, noting that it was well attended, collaborative, and supported through shared leadership, donations, supplies, and volunteer time. Cr. Heaton expressed pride in the involvement and leadership shown by the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and Salt River First Nation, particularly in supporting community initiatives and helping organize activities. She added that First Nations consultation is an important first step moving forward.

- iv. Cr. Karasiuk echoed congratulations to local graduates and spoke in support of the Phoenix School program, noting that it has operated successfully for more than 19 years and has supported over 200 graduates through both full-time and blended learning opportunities. He expressed concern over reports that the program's funding may be reduced or discontinued, stating that the program meets important community needs and suggesting that residents and former graduates should advocate more strongly for its continuation.

He also advised residents that the hospital open house previously scheduled for Thursday, which was to include the public administrator and CEO, has reportedly been cancelled and may be rescheduled for June. He encouraged residents to stay tuned for updated information.

- v. Cr. Bathe echoed concerns regarding ongoing challenges with education programming in the Northwest Territories and expressed support for advocacy efforts aimed at protecting programs that are important to the community. He noted the importance of maintaining strong programming opportunities in Fort Smith, both within schools and in the broader community, and expressed hope that upcoming discussions with the DEA would help move those conversations forward.



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On a more positive note, Cr. Bathe spoke about the increased use of the community track and the value it brings to residents. He shared his own experience of using the track to gradually return to running after an injury and described it as an important recreational asset for the community. He noted that the facility is heavily used throughout the day by walkers and runners of all ages, but also acknowledged that the track is beginning to show signs of wear and tear. Cr. Bathe suggested that even small repairs or maintenance improvements would help preserve the facility, emphasizing its importance to community health and recreation.

- vi. D/M Keizer noted that he received his new garbage cart at approximately 4:00 p.m. and understands that his area is among the last to be completed in town. He thanked staff and the delivery crew, noting that it was nice to have the opportunity to speak with those delivering the carts.

He also raised a concern regarding the red dresses displayed throughout the community for Red Dress Day. He observed that some remain in place, including one near the Water Treatment Plant, and expressed concern that they could be damaged if left up during upcoming weather events. He suggested that, if possible, they be collected and stored so they can be reused next year.

Finally, D/M Keizer advised that he will be attending the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Conference in Edmonton during the first week of next month. As a result, he will miss the council meeting scheduled that week, although he may be able to participate remotely. He noted that he won complimentary registration to the conference and will report back on his experience upon his return.

- vii. Mayor Fergusson reported attending the Fire Centre groundbreaking ceremony on May 1 and highlighted the significance of the \$30 million investment in the community. She noted the positive economic impact of the project through local employment opportunities and emphasized the value of the facility as a long-term community asset.

The Mayor advised that census workers are currently in Fort Smith and will remain in the community for the next three months. She encouraged residents to participate and respond to census questions, noting that the information collected is important for community planning and understanding population trends.

Mayor Fergusson also provided an update on activities of the Thebacha Leadership Council (TLC), noting that members have been actively meeting and collaborating on community priorities and initiatives. She reminded residents about the upcoming Fuel Break Management public meeting and encouraged attendance and public input.

She congratulated this year's graduates, expressing pride in the students and reflecting on having watched many of them grow up in the community. Lastly, Mayor Fergusson promoted an upcoming lunchtime presentation at Aurora College focused on red-sided garter snakes and climate adaptation.

- viii. Cr. Tuckey congratulated all graduating students and wished them a safe graduation season, encouraging everyone to make responsible choices and keep safety in mind during celebrations.



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He also expressed concern regarding the future of the Phoenix program, describing it as a successful initiative that has supported many students over the years and stating that it would be unfortunate to see the program reduced or eliminated.

In addition, Cr. Tuckey raised concerns about red dresses that remain displayed around town following the recent event, noting that several weeks have passed since the event concluded. He stated that leaving the displays unattended and exposed to damage is disrespectful and suggested they should be taken down and properly cared for.

- ix. Cr. Cox congratulated this year's graduates and reminded residents that the Housing Accelerator Fund program remains available as the community enters the building season. He encouraged residents to be aware of available grants and funding opportunities that support additional housing development in Fort Smith.

He also reminded residents about the importance of FireSmart practices, noting that the community is entering the spring dry season and conditions are drying out quickly. In addition, Cr. Cox referenced last week's Alertable system test and encouraged residents who have not yet signed up to do so through the emergency preparedness page on the [Town of Fort Smith website](#), noting that it is an important tool for emergency notifications and public communication.

9. PROCLAMATIONS

10. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Special Meeting of Council	May 31 st , 2026, @ 6 pm
Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate)	June 2 nd , 2026, @ 7 pm to be chaired by Cr. Tuckey
Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal)	June 16 th , 2026, @ 7 pm to be chaired by Mayor Fergusson

11. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

12. IN-CAMERA

# 26-113	Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey
That Council move in-camera in accordance with the Cities, Towns, and Villages Act, Section 23(3) (d) at 7:31 pm.	
PASSED	

# 26-114	Moved by: Cr. Tuckey Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette
That Council move out of in-camera at 8:08 pm.	
PASSED	

13. QUESTION PERIOD

14. ADJOURNMENT



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26-116

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: Cr. Keizer

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:09 pm.

PASSED

Minutes adopted this 2nd day of June 2026.


Dana Fergusson
Mayor


Certified Correct by David Henderson
Senior Administrative Officer

