



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
June 16, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

Minutes

The Regular meeting of the Council was held on
Tuesday, June 16, @ 7 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Fergusson, D/M Keizer, Cr. Benwell, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Karasiuk, Cr. Bathe, Cr. Tuckey, and Cr. Cox
Regrets: Cr. Couvrette
Staff Present: David Henderson, Senior Administrative Officer
Daniel Wiltzen, Economic and Tourism Development Officer (acting Recording Secretary)
Lauren Howes, Director of Community Services
Andrew Grenier, Director of Municipal Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

# 26-137	Moved by: Cr. Cox Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson
That the agenda be adopted as amended to add a briefing note to 7. Administration(e).	
PASSED	

3. DELEGATIONS

- a. Stand Alone Energy – Dennis Bevington

Jack Van Camp noted that Stand Alone Energy has worked closely with the Town over the past several years on NTPC grant applications. He acknowledged that these projects have presented ongoing challenges for the community and recognized that Council was gathered to discuss a different matter this evening.

Dennis Bevington introduced himself and Jack Van Camp as long-time business partners who have operate Stand Alone Energy in the North for approximately 26 years. He explained that the company has worked on a wide range of energy-related projects and was appearing before Council to discuss emerging energy technologies that could benefit the community.

Mr. Bevington highlighted the growing availability of battery energy storage systems in Canada and noted that Stand Alone Energy is partnered with Tros, a company currently installing a large battery storage system in Inuvik. The project will complement the Town of Inuvik’s 600-kilowatt solar array and help reduce energy costs for the community recreation centre. He suggested that battery storage systems could provide opportunities for Fort Smith to improve energy security, reduce operating costs, and take advantage of lower-cost interruptible power rates for heating and other energy needs.

Jack Van Camp explained that the Town of Inuvik's solar and battery project operates entirely on the municipality's side of the electrical meter, rather than through a net-metering arrangement with the power utility. Instead of selling excess power back to the grid for credits, the Town generates its own electricity, uses it directly, and stores surplus



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energy in a battery system for later use. He noted that this approach provides greater benefits to the municipality than traditional net-metering programs. Mr. Van Camp added that, with Inuvik paying approximately \$0.99 per kilowatt-hour for power, the project is expected to reduce the Town's electricity costs by at least \$12,000 per month.

Mayor Fergusson sought clarification on the proposed battery system, asking whether the battery would be installed on the Town's side of the electrical meter and used solely for municipal purposes. She asked if the electricity generated by solar panels would be stored in the battery for the Town's own use, rather than being fed back into the power grid.

Jack Van Camp confirmed that this is the approach being used in Inuvik, noting that the battery system is installed on the municipality's side of the meter and is used to store electricity for later use. He added that this is one of several possible ways the technology can be implemented.

Dennis Bevington spoke about the potential benefits of battery energy storage systems for both residents and municipal infrastructure. He noted that battery storage could be paired with the interruptible heating rate to allow homes to maintain electric heat during short power outages. He emphasized that battery systems could improve community resilience and energy security, particularly given recent evacuation experiences and ongoing concerns about the reliability of the hydroelectric system. He suggested that key municipal facilities, including the Fire Hall, the main sewage lift station, and the raw water intake, could benefit from battery backup systems to ensure critical services remain operational during emergencies. He explained that battery systems offer greater versatility than diesel generators because they can be charged from the electrical grid or renewable energy sources such as solar power, do not require fuel storage, and can be tailored to meet specific operational needs. Mr. Bevington also highlighted a territorial green energy funding program that can cover up to 75% of eligible project costs for municipalities and Indigenous governments, suggesting that the Town could leverage this funding to enhance energy security while minimizing local costs.

Jack Van Camp explained that for facilities with large pumps, the primary requirement is not necessarily additional battery capacity but rather a sufficiently large inverter capable of handling the startup load. He estimated that a battery backup system for the sewage lift station could cost between \$50,000 and \$80,000, largely due to the inverter requirements. He noted that the raw water intake would likely have similar needs, as it also relies on significant pumping equipment, although a detailed assessment has not yet been completed. Mr. Van Camp stated that his company is a battery systems supplier and would be interested in pursuing such projects if the Town chose to move forward. However, he acknowledged that any municipal project would be subject to the Town's procurement and competitive bidding processes.

Cr. Karasiuk thanked the presenters for attending and noted that he was not very familiar with battery storage technology. He asked what the expected lifespan of the batteries would be and how they would be disposed of or recycled once they reached the end of their useful life.

Mr. Bevington explained that lithium iron phosphate batteries generally have a lifespan of approximately 4,000 charge and discharge cycles. The actual lifespan depends on how frequently the batteries are used, as some installations may function primarily as backup systems and therefore experience relatively little cycling. He noted that systems paired with solar panels may be cycled more often to maximize the use of self-generated energy. Depending on the application and frequency of use, he indicated that a battery system could remain operational for up to 20 years or more.



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Cr. Benwell asked for clarification on the disposal process for batteries once they reach the end of their service life.

Mr. Bevington responded that lithium batteries are recyclable and that lithium itself is a valuable material that can be recovered and reused. He noted that with the growing number of batteries in use worldwide, recycling systems and processes have become well established and are equipped to handle batteries at the end of their service life.

Cr. Cox thanked the presenters for the information and noted that he had previously shared information about the same grant program with the Acting SAO, although he was unsure whether it had been circulated more broadly. He commented that the technology is interesting and mentioned that he had recently purchased a small solar backup system for his own home. Cr. Cox expressed hope that the Town may be able to identify opportunities to incorporate similar technologies into municipal facilities as buildings are renovated and upgraded.

Cr. Karasiuk asked whether there is a significant cost difference between installing battery systems in a new building versus retrofitting them into an existing facility. He noted that he was not seeking exact figures but was interested in understanding whether incorporating the technology during new construction is generally more cost-effective than adding it to an existing building.

Mr. Bevington explained that modern battery storage systems are designed for straightforward installation, requiring only simple electrical connections to integrate with a building's existing electrical system. He noted that today's systems are largely self-managing, making them easy to operate and maintain. Drawing on his own experience, he said that a system he installed six years ago would now cost about one-third as much, be much easier to install, and operate with virtually no issues, highlighting the rapid advancements in battery storage technology.

Mr. Van Camp stated that the world is experiencing an unprecedented and rapid energy transition, with solar, wind, and battery storage growing exponentially while costs continue to decline. He noted that battery storage is becoming increasingly cost effective, citing Ontario's recent investment in 3,500 MW of new battery capacity as an example of the technology's growing role. He also highlighted that clean energy projects in remote Canadian communities have significantly reduced diesel consumption over the past decade, with many projects led and owned by Indigenous organizations. Mr. Van Camp emphasized that communities such as Fort Smith are not alone in exploring these opportunities and said his organization can help connect communities with industry partners, identify suitable projects, and facilitate communication between communities and clean energy providers.

Mayor Fergusson thanked the presenters and said the information was timely, as the Town is considering renovations and replacements for its aging facilities. She noted that discussions about projects such as the fire hall and lift station provide an ideal opportunity to consider clean energy and battery storage solutions. She added that this perspective should be incorporated into future planning discussions and expressed appreciation that the presenters are available to support the community.

b. Fort Smith District of Education Authority – Connie Benwell

Cr. Bathe asked if someone in the room could read any questions aloud for him, as he was attending the meeting virtually.

Question 1: Given the large uptake in numbers this year, 1 JK, and 7K, was any information put out to parents to gauge interest for next year? If so, what did that look like, and how was



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it communicated to parents? Was the core French teacher asked to assess students to make recommendations to parents of students that would be a good fit for the program?

Cr. Benwell explained that the decision to discontinue the French Immersion program was made in response to budget reductions. She said maintaining the program was no longer feasible, as it required two teachers for a relatively small number of students. The decision was made to retain Core French instead, noting that another community had taken a similar approach. She also pointed out that the local high school does not offer French Immersion, meaning the program would have only been available at the elementary level while requiring a significant financial commitment.

Cr. Karasiuk clarified that the funding reductions were not solely the result of the loss of Jordan's Principal funding. He explained that declining student enrollment reduced overall funding, and an increased holdback from the divisional education board further impacted the budget. Together, these factors resulted in the loss of three teaching positions and four educational assistant positions compared with the previous year, creating the situation the District Education Authority had to address.

Question 2: The letter sent home to parents expressed that cutting the program was made to better prepare students to enter PWK, what data supports that the students were not prepared or that students in the program were not meeting grade level outcomes?

Cr. Benwell explained that offering Core French would better support students as they transition to high school, since French Immersion is not available at that level. She noted that many students enrolled in the French Immersion program already speak French at home and said the available funding was insufficient to continue operating the immersion program.

Question 3: If Mr. Stewart, principal of JBT and Mr. Soujah, superintendent for the SSDEC, both recommended that the FI program remain in place, why were their educated and professional opinions not given appropriate consideration? Given both of their backgrounds and experience, why was their opinion of the program and its viability not reflected in decision-making?

Cr. Benwell stated that while there were differing opinions on the decision, the District Education Authority acted within the authority granted to it under the Education Act and followed the legislative process in making its decision.

Questions 4: What research was done on funding and budgets to come to the conclusion that the French Immersion program is no longer viable?

Cr. Benwell explained that there was no research; it's just a fact that there was no money for it.

Question 5: What research was done on community impact when considering the removal of the French Immersion program?

Cr. Benwell said the District Education Authority invited parents of students enrolled in the French Immersion program to attend meetings and provide feedback. She noted that no parents attended the meetings and no responses were received to the letters that were sent. She added that the DEA had extensive discussions on the matter and ultimately made the decision in light of the funding reductions.

Question 6: What alternatives were/are being looked at to replace the French Immersion program, if none, why?



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Cr. Benwell emphasized that students will continue to receive French instruction through the Core French program, noting that it will be offered alongside Cree and Chipewyan language classes. She added that those were the questions received from the public and encouraged anyone with additional questions or concerns to attend District Education Authority meetings, which are open to the public and include opportunities for questions.

Cr. Bathe explained that the questions he raised had been brought forward by parents who had approached him with concerns about the District Education Authority's responsiveness. He noted that some parents felt their questions had not been adequately answered and recognized that not everyone is able to attend DEA meetings. He acknowledged that the DEA was dealing with significant budget reductions but recalled that, during a previous meeting with the education authority, it had been explained that the school received dedicated funding for offering the French Immersion program. He asked whether eliminating the program would result in a further reduction in funding for the school.

Cr. Karasiuk explained that when the French Immersion program was first introduced, the school received dedicated funding for the lead French Immersion teacher. As the initial cohort of students progressed through the grades and the program became fully established, that specific funding ended, leaving only the standard federal funding that all schools receive to support French language programming. He clarified that while the dedicated French Immersion funding is no longer provided, the school continues to receive its regular funding for Core French instruction.

Cr. Bathe thanked the District Education Authority for the response and noted that a previous presentation from the education authority had indicated there was dedicated funding for the French Immersion program, which was the basis for his earlier question. He also expressed concern about the wording used in the letter sent to parents, stating that he felt it reflected a misunderstanding of French Immersion and its educational benefits. He disagreed with the suggestion that students are disadvantaged by participating in French Immersion if the program is not available at the high school level, citing research and examples from other communities where immersion programs produce strong educational outcomes. While acknowledging the financial challenges facing the DEA, he said he believed the letter should have better recognized the value of immersion programs. He added that he would like the DEA to acknowledge this concern and emphasized the importance of protecting educational programs and services, noting that reductions in community services can make it more difficult to attract and retain professionals and families in Fort Smith.

Cr. Benwell apologized if the wording in the letter was perceived as inappropriate. She reiterated that the decision was driven by a lack of funding and noted that French Immersion is not offered at the high school. She added that the budget reductions have affected multiple programs, explaining that staffing changes have also impacted the Cree language program. She emphasized that the funding cuts have had consequences across the school, not only for French programming.

Cr. Tuckey noted that while the discussion had focused on French Immersion, he was also concerned about the impact of staffing changes on the Cree language program. He stated that assigning someone who is not fluent in Cree to teach the program would be a disservice to students and to the language itself.

Cr. Benwell agreed, stating that the staffing changes were a direct result of the funding reductions. She explained that the school does not have the resources to hire additional teachers and has had to reassign existing staff to meet its needs.



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Cr. Karasiuk raised a point of order, stating that the item had been intended as a presentation by the Chair of the District Education Authority and that the discussion had shifted into debating individual decisions. He acknowledged that discontinuing the French Immersion program had been a difficult decision but said he supported it given the financial realities. He noted that the DEA had to balance small French Immersion classes with larger regular classrooms that lacked adequate student support, emphasizing that decisions needed to consider the needs of the entire student population rather than a single program.

SAO Henderson reminded Council that the item had been scheduled as a delegation and presentation, with an opportunity for Council members to ask questions. He clarified that it was not intended to be a debate.

Cr. Cox noted that both of his children had participated in the French Immersion program and had been successful in high school. He asked whether the District Education Authority had considered the potential legal implications of discontinuing the program, explaining that he understood there may be obligations related to French language education, similar to those in communities with French language schools. He questioned whether eliminating French Immersion could result in a legal challenge or other consequences, including potential impacts on future funding.

Cr. Benwell replied that the District Education Authority had discussed the potential implications but ultimately concluded that the decision had to be made and proceeded accordingly.

Cr. Heaton suggested that further discussion on the issue would be more appropriate at a District Education Authority meeting, where interested residents could attend and discuss the matter in greater detail. She thanked the delegation for their presentation.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting of Council June 2, 2026

26-138

Moved by: Cr. Tuckey

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 2, 2026, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

Cr. Karasiuk thanked Town administration for rephrasing his comments in more appropriate language and expressed his appreciation for their assistance.

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

7. ADMINISTRATION

a. Community Services

i. Director's Report

Director Howes reported that May was a busy and successful month for Community Services and Recreation. She highlighted the start of the slow pitch season and the conversion of the curling arena into a seasonal parents and tots drop-in space for children eight years and under. In aquatics, additional staff training has been scheduled to expand programming later in the summer, while recruitment for lifeguards continues.



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She noted strong participation in library programs, including the study program and participation in Science Rendezvous, where staff offered virtual reality experiences featuring the International Space Station and astronaut-themed activities. Registration is now open for Theatre Camp, and the library is preparing to launch its Summer Reading Adventure for children, teens, and adults.

In childcare, two infant spaces have been filled, with three vacancies remaining. Warmer weather has allowed for more outdoor, land-based programming, and Protective Services was recognized for supporting Bike Day by teaching children about bicycle safety. Summer camp registration is also underway.

Director Howes also highlighted tourism and economic development initiatives, including attendance at a trade show in Yellowknife to promote Fort Smith and engage with potential visitors. She concluded by recognizing the Town's support for the May 5 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls event and thanking community partners and residents for their participation.

Cr. Cox asked for clarification that the pool attendance chart in the report represented the average number of people using the pool during each scheduled time period. Director Howes confirmed that was correct.

Mayor Fergusson shared her enthusiasm for the new recreation programming, noting that she had tried the pool's inflatable obstacle course and enjoyed the experience. She also expressed excitement about participating in the community baseball program. The Mayor then raised concerns about the reduction of programming offered by Parks Canada, noting that while visitor information staff remain in place, guided tours and interpretive programs have been eliminated. She said this is a significant loss for both residents and visitors, as it reduces opportunities to experience the area's natural and cultural attractions. She suggested the Town should consider advocating for the restoration of these programs, potentially through a letter to Parks Canada.

Cr. Karasiuk thanked Director Howes for the report and noted that while her verbal update referred to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Day, the written report used the term "Red Dress Day." He suggested that future reports use the formal name of the observance for consistency and clarity.

Director Howes apologized for the terminology used in the report. She explained that the wording had been based on references used by other communities but confirmed that the Town would use the formal name, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Day, in future reports.

Mayor Fergusson noted that the Recreation Centre backup generator is included in the Town's capital plans and, following the evening's delegation, asked whether a battery storage system could provide an additional layer of backup or improve the facility's resilience. She reflected on the challenges experienced during wildfire-related power outages, when diesel supplies and electrical generation became limited, emphasizing the importance of maintaining power for critical services. She suggested that battery backup systems could enhance the Town's emergency preparedness and encouraged Administration to explore the technology further through additional research.

D/M Keizer echoed the Mayor's concerns regarding Parks Canada programming and advised that he would be speaking with the Senior Administrative Officer later in the week. He said he also intended to reach out to his contacts within Parks Canada to better understand the situation and determine whether there were opportunities to support the restoration of programming. He committed to following up personally and reporting back to Council with any information he received.



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Director Howes provided further clarification regarding Parks Canada programming. She explained that Parks Canada continues to manage the campgrounds and the Kettle Point rental cabin and remains an active partner in community events, including Canada Day celebrations, school field trips, and visitor information services. However, she confirmed that Parks Canada is no longer independently delivering its own interpretive or guided programming.

A community member in the gallery commented that they had been watching the livestream and encouraged Council to share its concerns directly with Anna Cox at Parks Canada, suggesting that Council email her regarding the issues that had been raised about the reduction in programming.

ii. Briefing Note: Request for Support – Stone Point Development

26-139

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk

Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That Mayor and Council approve the request from Stone Point Development for the use of the Community Recreation Centre gymnasium and associated equipment from June 27 to 30, 2026, with an estimated in-kind value of \$411.00, subject to facility availability, operational requirements, and applicable Town policies.

PASSED

b. Municipal Services

i. Director's Report

Director Grenier provided an update on Public Works activities, noting that the alarm field cover project has been completed. With the spring cleanup and residential garbage collection now underway, crews are shifting their focus to sewer flushing, road maintenance, and other seasonal work.

He reported that the new residential garbage collection program is now in its fourth week. Administration continues to collect data on complaints, concerns, and operational performance as part of the pilot project. He noted that staff are becoming more familiar with the new collection routes and equipment, resulting in improved efficiency and shorter collection times, while asking residents to remain patient as the program continues to be refined.

Director Grenier also advised that Public Works has been preparing the grounds for the upcoming Salt River First Nation celebration by mowing and cleaning the area. In addition, he has been working with the Town, Salt River First Nation, and the Métis community to begin work on installing a fence around the cemetery and clearing and identifying the surrounding area.

Cr. Karasiuk said he would appreciate more detailed updates on the residential garbage collection program as it continues. He noted that, based on what he has observed, the crews are doing a good job. He recalled that on the first day of collection, his garbage was not picked up until about 8:30 p.m., and he had heard of other collections occurring even later. He said it appears the collection days are becoming shorter as crews gain experience with the new equipment and the routes continue to be optimized.

Director Grenier confirmed that collection times have improved and are now approaching the target of approximately eight hours. He explained that all operators are taking turns learning the new garbage truck and said staff continue to refine and optimize the collection routes as they gain experience.



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Cr. Karasiuk asked whether Administration anticipates the residential garbage collection program will require ongoing overtime once staff are fully trained and the collection routes have been optimized. Director Grenier confirms that at the moment there should not be a need for overtime going forward.

Cr. Karasiuk referred to the report's mention that the commercial bin collection program is operating as a pilot project and asked whether that means the remaining commercial bins will not be replaced until the following year.

Director Grenier confirmed that Administration intends to run the commercial collection pilot for a full year to evaluate how the new carts perform through all four seasons before making a long-term decision. He noted that replacing the remaining carts represents a significant financial investment, so Administration wants to ensure the chosen system is the right fit. He added that other collection options are also being explored to determine what is most sustainable and practical for the community, but emphasized that Administration plans to complete the full pilot project as previously directed by Council.

SAO Henderson added that Administration has already received feedback regarding the commercial collection program and has begun reviewing it internally. He said staff are discussing what aspects of the program are working well and identifying any operational challenges. Based on that feedback, Administration will consider whether adjustments to the commercial collection program are warranted.

Cr. Karasiuk noted that he had heard concerns from residents that the new garbage truck has difficulty maneuvering in cul-de-sacs. He asked whether Public Works staff have experienced similar challenges during collection operations.

Director Grenier acknowledged that the issue has been identified in a few locations and said it is part of the learning process as crews become more familiar with the new collection system. He explained that Administration will continue optimizing routes and, where necessary, will work with residents in affected cul-de-sacs to determine whether garbage carts should be placed at a common collection point or another location that improves access, similar to practices used in other municipalities.

Cr. Karasiuk said his final question was unrelated to garbage collection and instead concerned potholes. He noted that residents had raised concerns and asked whether the Town has a routine process for identifying potholes and carrying out regular repairs. He requested an overview of how the inspection and maintenance process works.

Director Grenier explained that the Town uses a camera system mounted on the garbage truck to identify road deficiencies, including potholes, as the truck travels throughout the community. The system, known as CityRover, digitally records and flags locations for Public Works staff, who compile the information and schedule repairs. He noted that resources have recently been focused on other priorities, including the new garbage collection program, but as those demands decrease, crews will shift their attention to pothole repairs and other road maintenance activities.

Mayor Fergusson thanked the Public Works team for their efforts following recent vandalism to the Town's flower pots and hanging baskets. She acknowledged the significant time and resources staff invest in maintaining the community's landscaping and encouraged residents to help protect these public spaces. She also commended the crew for their prompt cleanup and restoration of the damaged areas.

Director Grenier thanked community members Diane Seals and Christine Kaeser for their assistance following the recent vandalism. He noted that while some individuals damaged the Town's flower displays, Diane and Christine stepped forward to help restore them. He



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explained that the greenhouse had a limited supply of replacement flowers, making their support especially appreciated, and expressed his gratitude for their willingness to help beautify the community.

Cr. Benwell said she had seen a Facebook post about a resident's garbage cart being stolen and asked what the process is for residents who experience that situation. She asked Director Grenier how those cases are handled.

Director Grenier clarified that the garbage carts in question had not been stolen. He explained that Public Works had removed them because they had been placed at incorrect locations, as the carts are assigned to specific residential properties. He noted that each cart is equipped with an RFID tag, and the new collection system is currently being populated with location data. Once fully implemented, the truck's onboard cameras and RFID technology will identify carts that are placed at the wrong address, allowing staff to correct any issues and ensure carts remain assigned to the proper property.

Cr. Cox shared his observations on the new residential garbage collection program, noting that despite having eight people in his household over during graduation week, a single garbage cart provided sufficient capacity. He acknowledged hearing some complaints about missed collections but said that, based on conversations with neighbours, many of the concerns appeared to be related to later pickup times while crews continue to learn the routes. He commented that the issues he had heard did not seem significant and said he looks forward to seeing the benefits of the new system during the winter, when operators will be able to remain in a warm truck while completing collections.

ii. Briefing Note: Sidewalks and Concrete Works 2026 Tender Review

26-140

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council authorize Administration to negotiate a reduced scope with Delta Contracting, as the lowest compliant bidder, and return to Council with a proposed award amount and list of priority project components that can be completed within the approved budget. This option maintains momentum on the 2026 construction season while responding to the budget constraint identified in the tender review.

PASSED

Cr. Karasiuk said he wanted to ensure it was on the record that Council had originally budgeted approximately \$400,000 for the project, while the lowest tender received was about \$1.3 million. He noted that this represented a substantial funding gap and indicated that he could not support increasing the project budget to that level. Instead, he suggested considering a reduced project scope, such as limiting the amount of sidewalk replacement, along with only a modest budget increase if necessary.

Mayor Fergusson agreed with Cr. Karasiuk's approach, suggesting that Administration prioritize the areas of greatest need. She recommended focusing first on sidewalks that are in the poorest condition, create the greatest accessibility barriers, or present the highest safety risks, such as locations that limit mobility or make it difficult for wheelchair users to travel safely. She said Administration is best positioned to identify those priorities and recommended completing as much of the highest-priority work as possible within the approved budget.

SAO Henderson advised Council that significant cost increases on tendered capital projects are becoming increasingly common, both locally and across the country. He explained that projects are often budgeted based on estimates, but actual tender prices are coming in substantially higher. In this case, he noted that the sidewalk replacement project has been delayed for several years, while the approved budget has remained unchanged despite rising construction costs.



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He said Administration's recommendation is to proceed with negotiations with the lowest bidder to determine how the available funding can achieve the greatest benefit. This would involve identifying the highest-priority sidewalk replacements and adjusting the project scope to complete as much work as possible within the available budget. He added that, given the limited remaining construction season, Administration believes it is important to move the project forward this year rather than delay it further. He concluded by asking if Administration had anything further to add to the recommendation.

Director Grenier explained that the project was tendered in separate components, allowing Administration to identify the costs associated with specific sections of work. He said this approach provides flexibility to negotiate with the lowest bidder and focus available funding on the highest-priority areas, such as sections of deteriorated sidewalks or other critical infrastructure concerns. He noted that, while Administration would not identify the priorities until negotiations are complete, he believes this is the most practical approach to ensure meaningful work is completed this construction season. Otherwise, continued delays would only result in higher project costs over time.

He also advised Council that Administration is reviewing its capital project estimating process and will be introducing improvements to produce more accurate cost estimates in the future, including a review of the methods and information used when developing project budgets.

Cr. Heaton said she understood Administration's recommendation but asked where any additional funding for the project would come from. She questioned whether increasing the project budget would require reducing funding for other projects or priorities.

SAO Henderson clarified that, if Council adopts Administration's recommendation, the project budget would not be increased. Instead, Administration would negotiate with the lowest bidder to determine what work could be completed within the existing approved budget. He added that negotiations would not guarantee the project proceeds, as Administration would only move forward if the negotiated scope and pricing are considered acceptable.

c. Briefing Note: Housing Accelerator Fund – Development Fee Refund *update

26-141

Moved by: Mayor Ferguson

Seconded by: Councillor Cox

That Council direct Administration to discontinue the use of the Housing Accelerator Fund funding for development permit fee waivers that are not directly related to the creation of new housing units.

7 IN FAVOR
1 AGAINST
MOTION PASSED

Mayor Fergusson noted that the original briefing note estimated that covering development permit fees through the Housing Accelerator Fund would cost approximately \$10,000 to \$20,000. She observed that the actual cost has been significantly higher, exceeding \$50,000.

SAO Henderson clarified that the original estimate was approximately \$25,000, while the actual cost has reached about \$50,000. He explained that the difference could be due to a number of factors, such as a higher-than-anticipated volume of development permit applications or the original estimate being based primarily on residential development activity rather than all permit types. Regardless of the reason, he confirmed that the actual costs have significantly exceeded the initial estimate.



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Cr. Karasiuk asked how the proposed change would be implemented if the motion were approved. Specifically, he wanted to know whether it would take effect immediately or whether Administration would establish and communicate an effective date before the new process came into force.

SAO Henderson explained that, if the motion were approved, the change would take effect immediately. Residential development permit fees would continue to be covered under the Housing Accelerator Fund, while non-residential permits would no longer qualify. He clarified that the change would apply to all permit applications that have not yet been approved. Applications that have already received approval would continue to be processed under the previous policy, while any applications still under consideration would be subject to the new criteria.

Cr. Karasiuk said he understood that applications already approved would remain unaffected. He then asked whether there were any development permit applications currently under review that had not yet been approved and would therefore be affected by the proposed change.

SAO Henderson confirmed that there are development permit applications currently under consideration that would be affected by the proposed change. He noted that one example is an institutional development permit application, which carries fees of approximately \$17,000. He explained that this application was one of the cases that prompted Administration to review and bring forward the recommendation.

Cr. Karasiuk said he was uncomfortable applying the proposed change to development permit applications that are already under review. He stated that applicants submitted their permits in good faith under the existing policy and that changing the rules while applications are moving through the approval process would not be appropriate. He suggested that Council could instead establish a future effective date, after which any new applications would be subject to the revised criteria, while applications already in the system would continue under the existing policy.

Cr. Cox said that most non-residential developments are planned over several years and that proponents would likely have begun budgeting and preparing their projects well before the Housing Accelerator Fund was introduced. He noted that development permit fees represent a relatively small portion of overall construction costs, particularly when compared to the significant cost increases that can occur during a project. He added that redirecting funds from non-residential permit fee waivers would allow more Housing Accelerator Fund funding to support new housing, noting that every \$20,000 saved could contribute toward another housing project. For those reasons, he supported implementing the change sooner rather than later.

Mayor Fergusson said that, in her view, the Housing Accelerator Fund was always intended to support residential housing development, not institutional or commercial projects. She noted that the program had been promoted and discussed as an initiative to encourage new housing, and she did not believe proponents of institutional or commercial developments would reasonably expect their development or building permit fees to be covered under the program. For that reason, she did not believe applying the revised criteria to applications currently under review would constitute acting in bad faith.



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d. Briefing Note: DPA-033-26 Variance Request

26-142

Moved by: Cr. Cox
Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That Council approve the variance request associated with the Development Permit Application DPA-033-26. Permitting the proposed greenhouse at 97 Conibear Crescent to be located approximately 1 metre from the existing portable storage building, notwithstanding the 3 metre minimum building separation requirement of the Zoning Bylaw.

PASSED

e. Briefing Note: Canada-NWT CHIF Contribution Agreement for Raw Water Intake Project

26-143

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson
Seconded by: Cr. Karasiuk

That Council authorize the municipality to enter into the Contribution Agreement with the Government of the Northwest Territories under the Canada-NWT Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund for the Raw Water Intake Project.

PASSED

8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

- a. Bylaws and Policies
- b. Appointments Advisory Boards
- i. Expression of Interest – CSAB

26-144

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson
Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That Jeri Miltenberger be appointed to the Community Services Advisory Board for a two-year term ending June 16, 2028.

PASSED

c. Mayor and Council Round Table

- i. Cr. Karasiuk reported that, as a new member of the Bylaw Committee, he is pleased to see progress on the Animal Control Bylaw, which is nearing its final draft and will soon be circulated for community consultation. He also congratulated the students recognized at the PWK awards ceremony, noting that 30 graduates and 8 students achieved honour roll status, including graduating students, which he described as an impressive accomplishment for the community.

Cr. Karasiuk further shared encouraging news that, while not yet officially confirmed, alternative funding has reportedly been secured for the Laurie Hobart Volleyball Tournament and the Scott McAdam Badminton Tournament following earlier concerns about funding reductions. He thanked everyone involved in securing the support

- ii. Cr. Bathe thanked both delegations for attending the meeting, stating that he appreciated the opportunity for open discussion and community engagement. He also congratulated the organizers of the Fort Smith Pride Festival, describing it as a well-organized event that attracted visitors from outside the community. He said it



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was encouraging to see the festival's success and expressed his hope that it will continue for many years to come.

- iii. D/M Keizer reported that he attended the recent conference in Edmonton and is preparing a written report, which he expects to present to Council next month. He described the conference as a valuable experience, providing opportunities to connect with municipal leaders from across Canada and learn about governance structures and approaches to municipal meetings in other communities. He noted that he gained useful insights that could benefit Council and explained that, after the conference, he took a family vacation, which delayed completion of his report. He added that he expects to be back in Fort Smith the following day.
- iv. Mayor Fergusson reported that the Human Resources Committee has completed interviews for the Director of Corporate Services position and is now awaiting the next steps in the hiring process. She thanked the organizers of the Fort Smith Pride Festival, describing it as a well-attended and well-organized event that encouraged broad community participation.

The Mayor also provided an update on leadership discussions regarding the Northern Life Museum. She advised that leadership intends to sign an agreement in principle to continue working collaboratively on the museum. The proposed agreement has been sent for legal review, and any formal agreement will be brought back to Council for direction and approval before being finalized.

She encouraged residents to participate in the upcoming National Indigenous Peoples Day events taking place throughout the weekend and highlighted the Métis bannock-making event as one she was particularly looking forward to. She also congratulated St. John's Anglican Church on celebrating 90 years of service in Fort Smith, recognizing the success of its anniversary events and wishing the congregation continued success in the years ahead.

- v. Cr. Tuckey remarked that the recent community festivities were well attended and successful. He said he is looking forward to the upcoming National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations and expressed confidence that they would also be a successful event for the community.
- vi. Cr. Cox had nothing to note.
- vii. Cr. Benwell congratulated the organizers of the Fort Smith Pride Festival on a successful event and commended everyone involved for their hard work and dedication in making it a success.
- viii. Cr. Heaton congratulated the organizers of the Fort Smith Pride Festival on another successful and inclusive event. She encouraged residents, particularly youth, to consider volunteering at the animal shelter during the summer months to help care for the animals.

She also reminded the community that the thrift store would be accepting donations over the weekend and asked that donated clothing be washed, folded, and, where possible, free of pet hair. Cr. Heaton recognized Brenton Hall and Salt River First Nation for donating fresh vegetables to the food bank and thanked the food bank volunteers for the important work they do in supporting the community.



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Finally, she recognized Jesse McDonald and Peyton Shea for their leadership and dedication in escorting children safely from JBT to the Uncle Gabe's Friendship Centre each school day for lunch. She commended them for their care and commitment to the younger students and thanked them for their outstanding service to the community.

9. PROCLAMATIONS

10. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate)	July 7 th , 2026, @ 7 pm Chaired by Cr. Karasiuk
Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal)	July 21 st , 2026, @ 7 pm Chaired by Cr. Benwell

11. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

26-145 **Moved by: Mayor Fergusson**
 Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That Cr. Couvrette be excused from the regular meeting of Council on June 16th, 2026.

PASSED

12. QUESTION PERIOD

13. ADJOURNMENT

26-146 **Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk**
 Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:32 pm.

PASSED

Minutes adopted this 7th day of July 2026.


Dana Fergusson
Mayor




Certified Correct by David Henderson
Senior Administrative Officer