



Council of the Town of Fort Smith July 7, 2026 @7pm

MINUTES

The Regular Meeting of Council held on
Tuesday, July 7, @ 7 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

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

Regrets:

Staff Present: David Henderson, Senior Administrative Officer
Danel Wiltzen, Economic & Tourism Development Officer
Spencer Porter, Deputy Fire Chief

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Mayor Fergusson confirms quorum, calls meeting to order, and hands chair to Cr. Karasiuk. Cr Karasiuk reads the Land Acknowledgment of First Nations

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

26-147 **Moved by: Cr. Couvrette**
 Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the agenda be adopted as presented with the following edits:

- Number 10 is 12
- Exclusion of councillors is now 11
- Question period now 13
- Roundtable now 10
- New in camera at 14
- Adjournment at 15

Carried

3. DELEGATIONS

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

26-148 **Moved by: Cr. Cox**
 Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 16, 2026, be adopted as presented

Carried

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

In regard to Delegation for Power Battery's & electrical distribution.

Cr. Couvrette mentioned that this council has already requested a briefing note on the status of the power franchise agreement. He suggested that we need this briefing note before we can move forward on other projects around options for on going concerns about power generation / distribution.

Cr. Karasiuk confirmed if this request was prior to our current SAO. Cr. Couvrette confirmed that it was before SAO Henderson. Cr. Karasiuk suggested that the SAO can now prepare



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that briefing note around the topic of power franchise agreement(s).

SAO Henderson clarified that if council are formally requesting work done by staff, it should be brought to a motion.

Cr. Couvrette MOVES that administration be directed to prepare a briefing note on the status of the franchise agreement with NTPC and provide that note to Mayor & Council at their earliest convenience. Cr. Tuckey seconded the motion.

Cr. Kiezer asked if Cr. Couvrette was interested in a simple status update, or for specific agreement. Cr. Couvrette clarified that he was just curious about a status update and if there is currently a franchise agreement.

Mayor Fergusson clarified that we know the franchise agreement has been expired for a while and if that's why Cr. Couvrette was asking. She also wanted to clarify if Cr. Couvrette wanted staff to verify that claim, pursue a new franchise agreement or put it out to tender.

Cr. Couvrette AMEND the motion *for the addition of recommended next steps to be included*. Cr. Karasiuk confirmed with seconder Cr. Tuckey that the amendments are still agreeable.

Cr. Cox voiced uncertainty towards what can be gained at this current moment inquiring into a franchise agreement while NTPC in the middle of doing huge infrastructure upgrades.

Mayor Fergusson reminded council that for items like this, that an e-mail should go out in advance to give staff and administration an opportunity to get relevant details and information that would lead to a more informed conversation.

Cr. Couvrette clarified that it was raised up because we need a briefing note. It has been asked for many times and that there is likely a previously unactioned request for a briefing note on this topic. The intent was to ask administration if they can prepare a briefing note, not intending for a lengthy conversation. The franchise agreement is an important part of the conversation with power in Town. Did not intend for this to turn into a debate.

Mayor Fergusson believed it was a stretch from the minutes. To go from the delegation about batteries, to then talking about NTPC.

Cr. Couvrette affirmed that someone should have called a point of order, if it was out of realm.

Cr. Karasiuk questioned if anyone would want to call a point of order.

Mayor Fergusson called point of order citing that the business arising from the minutes was not exactly relevant to the previous meetings delegation.

Cr. Karasiuk confirmed the point of order.

As part of the June 16th Meeting, item 7, administration, discussion about sidewalk replacement tender and the cost associated. Cr. Couvrette shared that similarly, during a conversation about museum sidewalks, they ended up going with a chipseal option which was 10k-15k and they are showing that they can stand up to the test of time.

Cr. Couvrette suggested that we move away from concrete sidewalks and think about alternatives for the sidewalk project.

The next item was related to Community Services report page 7, discussion about Parks Canada / WBNP programming in the Town of Fort Smith. In early May, the interim super



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intendant for WBNP met with Mayor & Council and was quite expressive that WBNP has stumbled in their communication with the community and that part of that was an assessment crew coming to the community to assess trails, that the Visitor Information Centre was closed throughout the winter and that workforce adjustments were having on our community.

Cr. Couvrette displayed dissatisfaction with WBNP related to recent social media posts showing that the trail assessment individual is coming to town and that WBNP has not tried at all to contact the community about priority trails.

Cr. Couvrette suggests that Mayor should write a letter to TLC around the issue of WBNP not addressing community concerns about the direction that management seems to be moving in.

Cr. Karasiuk reminded Mayor & Council that suggestions are not binding.

# 26-149	Moved by: Cr. Couvrette Seconded by: Cr. Bathe
That Mayor contact TLC about writing the acting CEO of Parks Canada calling for an immediate discussion that the impacts of Parks Canada Management are having on the Town of Fort Smith economically and program wise.	
Carried	

Mayor Fergusson confirms that Mayor and Council met with the field unit superintendent on April 15th and that they gave a lot of hopeful responses then, with little action.

6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

7. ADMINISTRATION

Protective Services Report

a. Directors Report

The Acting Director of Protective Services Spencer Porter reported that EMS responded to 23 calls during the month, including 19 EMS incidents and four fire-related calls, which was slightly below the five-year average. Ongoing training continues to strengthen the department's ability to respond to both fire and medical emergencies.

Seven new members were successfully recruited through the Spring 2026 recruitment campaign. The Acting Director noted that the fire ban would be reduced to a fire restriction following the lifting of the regional fire ban.

Three firefighters remain deployed to Fort Simpson to assist with wildfire response efforts. Their work has been successful in challenging conditions, providing valuable experience while supporting other northern communities.

The Acting Director also provided an update on wildfire evacuations, noting that Fort Smith is serving as an evacuation centre for residents from Fort Resolution, Fort Simpson, and the Little Red River Cree Nation, with approximately 89 evacuees currently being accommodated.

Lands administration focused on development permit and business licence applications, ongoing Housing Accelerator Fund administration, and bylaw enforcement matters,



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including attendance at Territorial Court. Activity included six business licence reviews, one Housing Accelerator Fund action, three animal control enforcement files, and two traffic bylaw enforcement files. The Acting Director advised that enforcement numbers appear lower than usual due to staff leave and wildfire deployment, with additional activity expected to be reflected in next month's report.

The Acting Director reported that Protective Services continues to monitor nearby wildfires in collaboration with Parks Canada. While several fires remain active in the region, there are currently no concerns that they pose a threat to the community.

An update was also provided on occupational health and safety initiatives, with continued improvements being made to the online safety program to ensure employees have access to current safety information from any work site.

Mayor Fergusson wanted to commend the Protective Services team for supported the evacuation processes that have been taking place throughout the region and affirmed that the staff was doing a great job.

Cr. Bathe reiterated that the structure protection team knows how challenging the work they're doing in Simpson is and gives them kudos.

Cr. Karasiuk wanted some clarification on who determines Fort Smith is acting as the evacuation centre.

SAO Henderson clarified that they received a call from MACA that there would be under 100 people from Wrigley and that if it was over that number, we wouldn't have capacity.

Cr. Karasiuk then asked if there has been a PR blitz around the updating of the speed signages to 40km.

SAO Henderson clarified that the Executive Secretary has done social media posts about this process.

Mayor Fergusson clarified that the number was identified clearly through the Transportation Master plan due to a variety of reasons.

Cr. Karasiuk asked for further questions on Director's Report, no further questions.

Briefing Note – DPA – 036-26 Development application for a Home Occupation – Bed & Breakfast

26-150

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Councillor Tuckey

That DPA-036-26 , submitted by Rebecca and Joshua Gauthier , lot 160, plan 10, civic address 22 Camsell rd. be approved.

Carried



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Corporate Services Report

The Acting Director of Corporate Services, David Henderson, reported that the department's primary focus continues to be staffing and maintaining day-to-day finance and administration functions.

Recruitment is ongoing for the Director of Corporate Services, Receptionist, Payroll Clerk, and Executive Assistant positions. An internal staffing change was also made, with the Human Resources Manager position filled internally to support long-term organizational needs.

Administration is reviewing the Executive Assistant role to clarify responsibilities and position classifications as part of broader organizational improvements.

Council was advised that the 2025 audited financial statements have not yet been posted online because they require final approval from the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) following completion of the capital funding reporting process. Once those approvals are received, the finalized statements will be published.

The Acting Director also noted that Administration is reviewing internal processes and staffing structures to identify opportunities for greater efficiency while maintaining appropriate controls and managing organizational risk.

Cr. Karasiuk opened up the floor for questions on the directors report. There were none.

Cr. Karasiuk opened the flow for questions on the accounts paid list. There were none.

At the beginning of the meeting, the in-camera session was going to be moved to the end of the meeting, but as the motion regarding additional project funding is related to the in-camera discussion it was deemed prudent to move in camera prior to addressing said motion. To change at this point in the meeting, Cr. Karasiuk suggested a variation of the agenda if supported by a minimum of 2/3 of council.

Consensus of Council was to deal with the in-camera motion at this time, and the motion to go in-camera was entertained.

Motion to move "In Camera" regarding Contract Negotiations

26-151

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Deputy Mayor Kiezer

That the Council of the Town of Fort Smith move in-camera regarding Contract Negotiations

Carried

26-152

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

That the Council of the Town of Fort Smith move out of in-camera

Carried



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Raw Water Intake & Lift Station

26-153

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That the Council of the Town of Fort Smith approve additional design and project management funding of \$63,703

Carried

8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

- a) Bylaws - NONE
- b) Appointments Advisory Boards - NONE
- c) Mayor and Council / Board Representatives - NONE

9. PROCLAMATIONS

NONE

10. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal)	July 21, 2026, @ 7 pm, to be chaired by Cr. Benwell
Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate)	Aug 11, 2026, @ 7 pm, to be chaired by Cr. Tuckey

11. EXCLUSION OF COUNCILORS

26-154

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Cr. Heaton be excused from the regular meeting of Council on July 7, 2026.

PASSED

12. QUESTION PERIOD

13. COUNCILOR ROUND TABLE

- i. **Mayor Fergusson** welcomed the new Chief of the Salt River First Nation, Karen Youngman, and acknowledged the success of the community's National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations, highlighting the strong participation and interactive cultural activities.

The Mayor reported on a June 25 leadership meeting with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, where discussions focused on funding priorities for Fort Smith, including Breynant Hall, the future of the former residential school site, college housing, transportation infrastructure, and the transfer of federal buildings.

An update was also provided on a meeting with the Public Administrator for the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, who indicated support for returning greater decision-making authority to regional wellness boards. The



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Mayor encouraged residents to consider serving on the Regional Wellness Board.

The Mayor concluded by recognizing the outstanding efforts of the community, Town staff, and volunteers in supporting wildfire evacuees. She expressed pride in the generosity and compassion shown by residents and thanked everyone for helping make Fort Smith a welcoming place during a difficult time.

- ii. **Deputy Mayor Keizer** advised that a report from the recent Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) conference has been completed and will be shared with Council following review by the Mayor and Senior Administrative Officer.

He also commended Town staff and volunteers for their response to the wildfire evacuee reception efforts, noting he was impressed by the community's coordinated response. As a member of the LGANT committee, he added that observations from the evacuation response are already helping inform discussions on proposed legislative changes.

- iii. **Cr. Karasiuk** thanked Town staff for their work organizing the Canada Day celebrations and suggested Council explore ways to encourage greater participation in future community parades.

He shared his perspective on the Regional Wellness Council, expressing concerns about its advisory role and limited decision-making authority. While encouraging others to get involved if they wish to advocate for change, he noted his own concerns regarding its effectiveness and the lack of a public meeting during the recent visit by Health and Social Services leadership.

Councillor Karasiuk also extended condolences to the families of those who recently passed away, congratulated local resident Anne True on celebrating her 100th birthday, and reminded residents that memberships for the Fort Smith Seniors Society would be available for purchase later that week.

- iv. **Cr. Bathe** recognized the efforts of Town staff, Council, and volunteers in supporting wildfire evacuees, noting that Fort Smith has provided a welcoming and supportive environment during a difficult time. Positive feedback was shared from evacuees, including individuals who had previously been displaced during the Fort Simpson flooding, who described their experience in Fort Smith as significantly improved. He thanked everyone involved for their dedication and compassion in assisting those affected by the wildfires.

- v. **Cr. Tuckey** commended the success of the National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations and acknowledged the community's efforts in welcoming and supporting wildfire evacuees.

He also expressed condolences to the families, friends, and colleagues of the firefighters who recently lost their lives in the line of duty. In addition, he extended his sympathies on the passing of local resident Yogi, recognizing his significant contributions and respected reputation in wildfire firefighting throughout the North.

- vi. **Cr. Cox** expressed condolences to those affected by the recent aviation accident, noting the tragedy resonated personally due to his own extensive aviation



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experience.

He also commented on the success of the Canada Day celebrations, noting the strong community turnout and positive participation in the barbecue and festivities.

vii. **Cr. Heaton** – EXCUSED

viii. **Cr. Benwell** congratulated everyone involved in organizing the Canada Day celebrations, noting the event was well attended and received positive feedback. She also acknowledged the community's successful support of wildfire evacuees.

Councillor Benwell extended her condolences to the families and friends of those who recently passed away, including the firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty and well-known local musician Bimbo.

ix. **Cr. Couvrette** emphasized the importance of both Wood Buffalo National Park and Aurora College to Fort Smith's long-term economic sustainability. He expressed concern over decision-making authority increasingly being shifted away from the community and stressed that local advocacy is necessary to protect these key institutions. He commended community leadership for continuing to advocate for the future of both the Park and the College, recognizing their significance to the community's economic well-being.

14. ADJOURNMENT

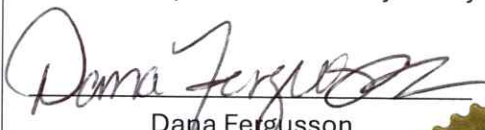
26-154

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:13 pm.

CARRIED

Minutes adopted this 21st day of July 2026.


Dana Fergusson
Mayor


Certified Correct by David Henderson
Senior Administrative Officer

