



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
August 11, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

MINUTES

The Regular meeting of the Council was held on
Tuesday, August 11, @ 7 p.m. in the Town Hall Council Chambers.

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. D/M Keizer confirms quorum and reads the Acknowledgment of First Nations. D/M Keizer hands the chair to Cr. Tuckey

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

26-163

Moved by: D/M Keizer

Seconded by: Cr. Karasiuk

That the agenda be adopted as amended to add a delegation from the RCMP and an expression of interest to section 8 Council Business (C) Appointments

PASSED

3. DELEGATIONS

- a. Monthly Policing Report – RCMP

Cst. Nelu Giurgea introduced himself and Cst. Magalie Irvine, noting that they are both new to the community and that Cst. Irvine is a new officer.

Cst. Giurgea provided an overview of notable RCMP occurrences and calls for service for July. He reported that investigations remain ongoing into incidents on July 5 and an arson at a residence on July 9. On July 31, members responded to multiple complaints involving the same individual, including a break and enter at a local business where an overnight staff member was assaulted. The individual was located and arrested after allegedly assaulting responding RCMP members. Several charges are pending. Members sustained minor injuries, while the individual was not injured during the arrest.

Cst. Giurgea reported 32 calls related to missing persons and well-being checks, all of which had positive outcomes. The detachment also responded to numerous assault-related calls, including incidents involving weapons or bodily harm, with several investigations and charges pending. Members responded to multiple Mental Health Act complaints involving individuals at risk of harming themselves, which required immediate intervention and, in some cases, transportation to the hospital for assessment.

Cst. Giurgea noted that July saw 23 reported assaults, excluding sexual assaults, which was higher than the same period the previous year. He advised that he would answer questions where possible or forward them to Detachment Commander Sgt. Jacobson, who was unable to attend due to training in Hay River.

D/M Keizer asked about the current staffing levels at the Fort Smith RCMP Detachment.



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Cst. Giurgea advised that the Fort Smith Detachment currently has eight members, including the Detachment Commander. He noted that staffing remains limited due to a new member undergoing training, another member on a progressive return-to-work schedule, firearms training requirements, and vacation leave. Despite these challenges, coverage has improved. The detachment expects a new Corporal and an additional member to arrive in September, which should further improve shift coverage and service to the community.

Cr. Karasiuk asked whether the two arson investigations involved the same property or two separate properties.

Cst. Giurgea confirmed that the incidents involved two separate properties, one occurring overnight on July 5 and the other on July 9. He noted that property damage was limited and that both investigations remain ongoing, so no further details could be provided.

Cr. Karasiuk noted that there were 49 reported incidents of causing a disturbance or mischief this past month, compared to 31 during the same month the previous year, and asked if there was any indication as to why the number had increased significantly.

Cst. Giurgea advised that, as he is new to the community and began working in Fort Smith in August, he could only provide a limited response. He noted that several individuals had recently been displaced from Wrigley and that calls involving individuals from that community contributed to the increase in calls for service. He did not have a specific number of related files available.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Regular Meeting of Council July 21st, 2026

26-164

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 21st, 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 reported that July was a busy month for Protective Services, with 37 calls, including six fire calls and 31 ambulance calls. Both were above the five-year average, which may have been influenced by the evacuation and related activity. Despite reduced staffing and summer leave, regular weekly training continued, with plans for an EMR course in the fall and NFPA 1001 firefighter training beginning in January.

Director McNab highlighted the community's response to nearly 90 evacuees, recognizing Director Howes, Deputy Fire Chief Spencer Porter, volunteers, local businesses, and others who assisted. Three structural firefighters were also deployed to Fort Simpson for 18 days with the Town's structural protection equipment. Their efforts contributed to protecting neighbourhoods threatened by wildfire. After-action reviews will be completed for both the evacuation response and the wildland-urban interface deployment.



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Land and development and business licensing activities remained generally consistent. Bylaw enforcement experienced temporary staffing impacts due to the deployment, with the Lands Officer providing coverage. Upon the Bylaw Officer's return, animal control and public education regarding loose animals became a priority. The July Occupational Health and Safety meeting was postponed due to staffing shortages and will resume in August.

Director McNab also provided an update on the Town's new fire training facilities. The first training unit has arrived in the community and will support search and rescue, roof ventilation, window rescue, and other exercises. A second unit, a flashover training simulator, is expected to arrive within approximately two weeks. Together, the facilities will allow the Fire Department to complete NFPA 1001 certification training locally while continuing opportunities for cross-training with other departments.

Cr. Cox commended everyone involved in the evacuation response, noting the positive feedback shared online. He then asked if there was an estimated timeline for the public distribution of the Animal Control Bylaw.

Director McNab advised that updates to the Animal Control Bylaw had been completed before his leave and that the document is ready for public consultation. He noted that it will be distributed to the local animal society, animal-related businesses such as Northern Hound Supply, and Salt River First Nation as part of the MSA consultation process. He confirmed that the bylaw will be distributed by the end of the week.

Cr. Benwell expressed concerns regarding the 40 km/h speed limit, noting that some residents feel it is too slow and have suggested that 45 km/h would be more reasonable. She asked whether there is an opportunity to reconsider or amend the speed limit.

Director McNab advised that the Integrated Transportation Master Plan, approved by Mayor and Council, identifies 40 km/h as the community speed limit, with some areas designated at 30 km/h. He noted that 40 km/h has also been established in the Town's bylaw for decades. The required 40 km/h signage has been purchased, is in the community, and has been installed along the highway corridor.

Cr. Benwell noted that the speed limit had previously been posted at 50 km/h in some areas of the community. She reiterated her concern that 40 km/h is too slow and suggested that 45 km/h may be a more reasonable speed limit, particularly given that some areas are already reduced to 30 km/h.

SAO Henderson cautioned against quickly reversing the decision, given the time and financial investment involved in implementing the Transportation Master Plan and associated speed limits. He advised that, if Council wished to reconsider the matter, a motion directing Administration to review the speed limit would be an appropriate first step. He noted that any change would require further discussion, particularly given the recent implementation and enforcement efforts.

Cr. Karasiuk asked for confirmation that all Town equipment loaned or deployed to other communities had been returned to Fort Smith.

Director McNab confirmed that the Type Six engine and Type II trailer deployed to another community have both returned to Fort Smith. The Type II trailer has been rehabilitated, and some missing equipment was identified. Those items will be replaced through the Wildland Urban Interface Agreement. He noted that none of the missing equipment is critical to the trailer's operation and that it is currently available for use.

Cr. Karasiuk asked for an update on discussions with the College regarding a potential location for the fire training grounds.



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Director McNab advised that Administration has reached out to the College several times regarding a potential location, but the primary contact is currently believed to be on leave. Discussions are ongoing. He added that Administration is also pursuing other potential lands through the ECC Lands Department and has a meeting scheduled to discuss those options.

ii. Briefing Note: DPA-039-26 Southern North Outdoors

26-165

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: D/M Keizer

That DPA-039-26, submitted by Stephen Ziemann, for the operation of an outdoor recreation equipment rental business, from Lot 1, Plan 220, 90 McDougal Road, Fort Smith, be approved

PASSED

Cr. Couvrette expressed concern regarding the review process and requested clarification on the proposed outdoor recreation equipment rental operation. He asked whether customers would be picking up rental equipment from the property or if the business would operate solely through delivery, noting that customer pickups could increase traffic and potentially impact neighbouring properties.

Cr. Karasiuk added to Cr. Couvrette's concerns, noting that the application indicates an anticipated increase in vehicle and foot traffic. He asked whether an estimate had been provided regarding the frequency or volume of customers attending the property to pick up rental equipment.

Cr. Cox stated that he had no concerns with the application, noting that the business appears to involve small-scale equipment rentals such as bicycles, camping gear, and canoes. He noted that other small businesses generate similar levels of traffic and that potential traffic concerns could be monitored through the renewal process. He emphasized the importance of supporting small businesses and suggested that, if the business grows to the point where traffic becomes an issue, a commercial location could be considered at that time.

D/M Keizer noted that he is familiar with the property and that it was previously used as a church, which regularly generated vehicle traffic and utilized the available parking on the property. Based on his knowledge of the site, he supported Cr. Cox's comments and expressed support for allowing the applicant to establish and grow the business in Fort Smith.

iii. Briefing Note: DPA-040-26 Joel Ngeze

26-166

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That DPA-040-26, submitted by Joel Negeze, for the operation of a mobile vehicle detailing business, from Lot 3, Plan 220, 86B McDougal Road, Fort Smith, be approved

PASSED

b. Corporate Services

i. Director's Report

SAO Henderson provided an update on Corporate Services, advising that he will remain Acting Director until the new Director of Corporate Services begins on August 17. He noted



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that onboarding will take approximately one to two weeks, after which priority will be given to outstanding financial matters. He also announced that Director Howes has accepted the

permanent Director of Community Services position and recognized her performance in the role, including her work during the recent evacuation.

Property tax bills have been issued, and collections are underway. Information regarding the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Relief program was included in the report to help clarify the process for residents. Payments in lieu of taxes and similar revenues have not yet been invoiced but are being prepared, with no immediate cash flow concerns.

SAO Henderson advised that the final 2025 audited financial statements are still outstanding and will require minor corrections, primarily related to the reporting of capital items. No material changes are anticipated. Administration is also working to improve capital project and grant tracking and reporting following the recent management changes.

Administration is reviewing commercial solid waste pricing in response to concerns raised by larger waste producers. SAO Henderson noted that some recent pressures may have been related to increased demand during the evacuation period and advised that the situation will continue to be monitored before changes are considered.

The Town is also undergoing renewal of its 15-year water licence, with AECOM serving as project manager. Information is currently being distributed to affected parties along the watercourse for feedback, with no significant concerns anticipated as the existing facilities and operations remain largely unchanged.

SAO Henderson outlined the proposed 2027 budget schedule, with the goal of having operating and capital budgets approved by December 31 in accordance with legislation. Completing the capital budget earlier would allow the Town to issue tenders sooner, improve competition, secure contractors before the construction season, and allow staff to focus on implementation at the beginning of the year.

He also recommended reviewing the Rates and Fees Bylaw annually. Regular, incremental updates would help avoid significant increases after several years without adjustments and provide a more consistent approach to maintaining Town fees.

Cr. Couvrette expressed support for the proposed budget calendar, noting that in his nine years on Council, the budget process has typically not begun until around mid-November. He recommended that Council accept and adhere to the proposed schedule and welcomed the opportunity to begin discussing the 2027 budget as early as August.

- ii. Accounts Paid List
- iii. Correspondence

- c. Briefing Note: Elders in Motion



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d. Briefing Note: Donation Request – Fitz’s Bombers Slo-Pitch Tournament

26-167

Moved by:

Seconded by:

That Council approve:

- The waiver of the Harry Sudom Ball Park tournament rental fee for the Fitz Bombers Slo-Pitch Tournament, September 11–13, 2026, with an estimated value of **\$363.00**;
- The donation of a Town of Fort Smith promotional gift basket, with an estimated value of **\$78.00**; and
- A monetary contribution of \$250 toward the Fitz Bombers Slo-Pitch Tournament.

PASSED

8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

- a. Bylaws and Policies
 - b. Mayor and Council Round Table
- i. Cr. Cox had nothing to report.
 - ii. Cr. Couvrette expressed condolences on the passing of Gary. He reflected on getting to know Gary during the evacuation and remembered him as a man with a great heart who will be deeply missed.
 - iii. Cr. Benwell had nothing to report.
 - iv. Cr. Heaton was excused.
 - v. Cr. Karasiuk expressed concern regarding information that the Teacher Education Program at Aurora College is being relocated to Yellowknife. He noted ongoing concerns about academic programs being moved away from the Fort Smith Thebacha Campus and suggested that the Town, in collaboration with the Thebacha Leadership Council, take a stronger position on the matter. He stated that if the Teacher Education Program is relocated, an equivalent academic program should be established at the Fort Smith campus.
 - vi. Cr. Bathe supported Cr. Karasiuk’s comments regarding changes to programming at Aurora College. He acknowledged that relocating the Teacher Education Program to Yellowknife may provide students with greater access to schools for practicum placements but emphasized that programming in Fort Smith should be expanded in return. He suggested opportunities such as expanding the ENRTP program and increasing heavy equipment and trades-related training to prepare residents for major northern infrastructure projects. Cr. Bathe stressed the importance of training and hiring local workers rather than relying on workers from southern Canada.
 - vii. D/M Keizer had nothing to report.
 - viii. Mayor Fergusson expressed her gratitude to the Fort Smith community for its support of more than 90 evacuees from Wrigley. She noted that evacuees spoke positively about their experience and felt welcomed and supported throughout their stay. She also recognized Director Howes and Deputy Fire Chief Porter for their efforts during the evacuation response.



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Mayor Fergusson also addressed concerns regarding Aurora College programming, advising that the Thebacha Leadership Council recently met specifically to discuss the issue and has developed a plan to advocate for Fort Smith. She emphasized that the TLC does not want to see academic programming removed from the community without equivalent programming being introduced and advised that leadership is actively working on a response.

ix. Cr. Tuckey had nothing to report.

c. Appointments

26-168

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Cr. Karasiuk

That Brenda Johnson be appointed to the Development Appeal Board for a two-year appointment ending on August 11, 2028.

PASSED

9. PROCLAMATIONS

10. IN-CAMERA

26-169

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council move in camera in accordance with the Cities, Towns, and Villages Act, Section 23(b), at 7:52 pm.

PASSED

26-170

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council move out of in-camera at 8:20 pm

PASSED

11. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal)	August 25 th , 2026, @ 7 pm, chaired by Mayor Fergusson
Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate)	September 1 st , 2026, @ 7 pm, chaired by Cr. Karasiuk

12. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

26-171

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Cr. Benwell

That Cr. Heaton be excused from the Regular Meeting of Council on August 11, 2026.

PASSED

13. QUESTION PERIOD



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14. ADJOURNMENT

26-172

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk

Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:38 pm.

PASSED

Minutes adopted this 1st day of September 2026.


Dana Fergusson
Mayor




Certified Correct by David Henderson
Senior Administrative Officer