MEDIA RELEASE – November 2, 2026

Town of Fort Smith Provides Update on Animal Shelter Operations and Municipal Animal Control Services

The Town of Fort Smith wants to provide residents with clarification about the current discussion surrounding the Fort Smith Animal Shelter, the role of the Municipality, and the services that will continue to be provided to our community.

First and foremost, **the Town of Fort Smith is committed to maintaining animal control services and ensuring that the municipal animal shelter remains operational.**

There has been some confusion surrounding the Town's responsibilities, the Animal Society's role, and what changes may mean for animals currently in the community. We believe it is important that residents understand the distinction.

The Town's responsibility does not change

The Town has an established municipal animal control program supported by its Bylaw Department, municipal facilities, and operational resources.

The Town will continue to:

- Enforce municipal animal control bylaws.
- Respond to animal control concerns and complaints.
- Operate and maintain the municipal animal shelter.
- Provide basic care for animals in municipal custody, including food, water, shelter and sanitary living conditions.
- Organize and coordinate volunteers supporting shelter operations.
- Work toward returning animals to their owners or finding suitable adoption and foster placements wherever reasonably possible.

These are ongoing municipal services, and residents can expect them to continue.

Understanding the partnership

For many years, the Fort Smith Animal Society and its dedicated volunteers have contributed significantly to animal welfare in our community. Their efforts have helped provide additional care, support, adoption opportunities, fundraising and spay/neuter initiatives.

The Town values this contribution and recognizes the time and commitment that volunteers have invested.

However, municipal animal control services and the additional programs delivered by a non-profit animal welfare organization are not the same responsibility.

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The Town's role is to provide a reasonable and sustainable baseline level of municipal animal control and shelter services. The Society has historically helped expand those services through its volunteers, fundraising and additional programs.

We recognize that there are different expectations about what the shelter should provide. We also recognize that the community would like to see the highest possible level of care for every animal.

Our responsibility is to balance those expectations with the financial and staffing resources available to the Municipality.

A more structured and sustainable approach

The Town is taking a proactive approach to reviewing how shelter operations are organized and delivered.

This includes creating clear responsibilities and expectations, reviewing animal intake and length-of-stay procedures, and ensuring that available resources are being used effectively.

Volunteers will play an important role in the continued operation of the shelter. The Town already has a small but growing group of volunteers, and November shifts are beginning to fill. We welcome additional residents who are interested in helping.

The Town's baseline approach will focus on meeting animals' essential needs: food, clean water, appropriate shelter, sanitary living conditions and necessary care while they are in municipal custody.

Where possible, animals will be returned to their owners, placed in foster care or made available for adoption. Animals that cannot reasonably be rehomed or cared for within available resources will be managed in accordance with applicable bylaws, animal welfare requirements and appropriate humane care practices.

The Town will also continue to support visiting veterinary services by providing access to municipal facilities and the necessary site services. Veterinary programs, including spay and neuter initiatives, remain an important part of the broader animal welfare effort.

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Community involvement matters

We know that animal welfare is important to Fort Smith residents. We encourage residents to participate in the public survey, contribute to the advisory board discussions, volunteer their time, and share constructive ideas about how animal control and shelter services can continue to improve.

The Town is not stepping away from its responsibilities. We are working to establish clear processes, appropriate service expectations and a sustainable operating structure.

The shelter will remain operational. Animal control bylaws will continue to be enforced. Animals in municipal custody will continue to receive basic care.

We appreciate everyone who has contributed to animal welfare in Fort Smith, and we look forward to working with residents and volunteers as we move forward.

Town of Fort Smith