Council of the Town of Fort Smith
October 6, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

MINUTES

The Regular meeting of the Council was held on
Tuesday, October 6, @ 7 p.m. in the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present:	D/M Keizer, Cr. Benwell, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Karasiuk, and Cr. Cox
Regrets:	Mayor Fergusson, Cr. Bathe, Cr. Couvrette, and Cr. Tuckey
Staff Present:	David Henderson, Senior Administrative Officer
	Daniel Wiltzen, Acting Recording Secretary
	Adam McNab, Director of Protective Services
	Awa Mbacke, Director of Corporate Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

a. Cr. Heaton confirms quorum, reads the Acknowledgment of First Nations.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

 # 26-193 **Moved by: Cr. Cox**
Seconded by: Cr. Karasiuk

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

PASSED

3. DELEGATIONS

a. Monthly Policing Report - RCMP

Sgt. Jacobson provided an update on RCMP operations, reporting that file numbers have decreased following an increase in activity over the summer and are now more consistent with levels recorded during the same period last year. He also confirmed the arrival of a new RCMP member in September and noted that staffing levels are in a favourable position compared to previous years.

Council discussed ongoing concerns regarding drug trafficking, with Sgt. Jacobson confirming that the RCMP continues to receive information through direct complaints and Crime Stoppers, emphasizing the importance of community reporting.

An update was also provided on the secure room being developed at the hospital. Sgt. Jacobson advised that construction was anticipated to be completed by mid-October, followed by the required certification and staff training before the facility becomes operational.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting of Council September 15th, 2026

 # 26-194 **Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk**
Seconded by: Cr. Benwell

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 15, 2026, be adopted as presented.

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

7. ADMINISTRATION

a. Protective Services

i. Director's Report

Director McNab reported that fire and ambulance calls were above the five-year average for September, with a combined total of 30 calls. Regular Wednesday training continued, and a two-day train-the-trainer course is scheduled for the new live fire training facility located at Aurora College on King Street. Additional training opportunities are being planned, including Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) courses, an NFPA 1001 program beginning in January, and advanced wildland-urban interface crew boss training.

Land and development activities remained consistent, with several development permits and business licences issued. Director McNab noted that the number of active business licences has returned to approximately the same level as 2025, addressing earlier concerns about a possible decline in local businesses.

Bylaw enforcement remained busy with animal control and traffic-related matters. Garbage bin compliance and civic addressing efforts focused primarily on public education rather than enforcement. Residents have responded positively, with 100% compliance among properties contacted regarding civic address signage.

Director McNab also provided updates on capital projects, highlighting the October 13 launch of the new computer-assisted dispatch system, which will improve coordination with partner agencies and automate incident reporting. Additionally, updated civic address mapping has been completed in partnership with GNWT Geomatics. The Town now has access to its own GIS mapping data and plans to introduce an interactive map on its website, allowing residents to view civic addresses, property lot information, and fire hydrant locations, which may assist with insurance inquiries.

Cr. Cox inquired about the status of fire-damaged properties in the community, noting concerns raised last year as winter approached. He acknowledged that several properties had since been cleaned up and asked whether any fire-damaged structures remained standing.

Director McNab advised that several fire-damaged properties have been remediated, with another property on Field Street currently undergoing asbestos removal in preparation for remediation. He noted that two fire-damaged structures remain standing, with property ownership complications presenting challenges. Administration continues to pursue enforcement measures and work with the property owners to address these structures, which pose both aesthetic and public safety concerns.

Cr. Cox referred to the bylaw enforcement report regarding unauthorized use of Town land being addressed through encroachment files. He asked whether enforcement action is

initiated only upon receiving a complaint or whether Town staff proactively identify and address encroachments.

Director McNab explained that encroachment enforcement is initiated through both public complaints and proactive identification by Town staff, depending on the circumstances. He noted that unauthorized use of Town land is often identified during routine maintenance or FireSmart activities. These encroachments must be addressed to ensure the Town can

properly access, maintain, and manage its lands, including carrying out necessary fire prevention work.

Cr. Karasiuk noted that Town Hall had undergone an assessment as part of the planning process for the new fire hall and that a report was expected to be provided. He asked whether Council had received the final assessment report.

Director McNab advised that Administration has received the draft report, which includes Class D cost estimates for the remediation and expansion of Town Hall, based on the needs assessment, as well as the demolition of the former library to create additional parking. He noted that the SAO and himself are currently reviewing the documents and will provide feedback to the contractor before finalization. Once completed, the report will be presented to the Mayor.

Cr. Cox requested an update on the animal control matter.

Director McNab advised that Administration recently met with the Animal Society, where the proposed animal control bylaw was discussed. He emphasized that the matter remains a priority for Mayor and Council, the Animal Society, and Bylaw Enforcement.

Administration is currently allowing Salt River First Nation adequate time to review the proposed bylaw, in accordance with the Town's Municipal Services Agreement (MSA). Other stakeholders, including the Animal Society, have also been consulted, and Administration is awaiting their feedback before proceeding.

Cr. Heaton noted that no ATV bylaw violations were reported for the month and asked whether this reflected improved compliance among youth as a result of the Town's ongoing education efforts.

Director McNab advised that the absence of reported ATV violations does not necessarily indicate improved compliance. He explained that Bylaw Enforcement has been occupied with animal control and other traffic-related matters. He also noted ongoing concerns with youth fleeing from enforcement vehicles, creating additional safety risks. For safety reasons, enforcement officers will not pursue individuals when it is unsafe to do so.

ii. Briefing Note: Variance Request - 28 York Crescent

 # 26-195 **Moved by: Cr. Cox**
Seconded by: Cr. Benwell

That Council approve the variance application for Lot 1730, Plan 4313, municipally known as 28 York Crescent, to permit a caretaker's suite with a maximum floor area of approximately 1,040 sq. ft. (96.6 m^2), subject to compliance with all other applicable requirements of Zoning Bylaw No. 1063.

PASSED

iii. Briefing Note: Land Disposal – 22 Whitford Road

 # 26-196 **Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk**
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council give first reading to the Land Disposal Bylaw No. 1085 Lot 1766, Plan 4330 (22 Whitford Rd.), authorizing the transfer of the subject lands to Rajyashri S. Waghray and Pranay Waghray for the amount of $70,441.00

PASSED

b. Corporate Services

i. Director's Report

Director Mbacke provided financial and administrative updates, beginning with staffing. She advised that an offer has been extended for the receptionist position, with the successful candidate expected to begin October 14. The Payroll Officer position has been reposted after the previous candidate declined the offer. She explained that the position is a temporary maternity leave replacement, now reduced to approximately six months due to the employee's anticipated early return in April 2027. Administration is exploring alternative coverage options, including cross-training, as the current employee providing coverage is also expected to begin maternity leave in December.

Director Mbacke confirmed that the September 2026 accounts payable listing has been provided to Council. She also reported that the external auditors have finalized the 2025 year-end adjustments, which Administration is currently processing to formally close the 2025 fiscal year.

She further advised that a new corporate credit card usage policy and user guide came into effect on October 1, 2026, to improve purchasing procedures, compliance, and accountability.

Lastly, Director Mbacke addressed recent public concerns regarding water billing rates and seniors' property tax exemptions. She assured Council that Administration is actively reviewing the affected accounts and working with Accounts Receivable to resolve the issues as quickly as possible. She acknowledged residents' concerns and thanked them for their patience.

Cr. Karasiuk noted a significant payment to Pelican Rapids for hotel accommodations associated with the Town's role as a reception centre during wildfire season. He requested confirmation that these expenses would be recoverable.

Director Mbacke confirmed that the expenses are recoverable through MACA and advised that the Director of Community Services has already initiated the reimbursement process.

Cr. Heaton inquired whether the budget discussions remain on schedule and if Administration is still working toward the previously established November timeline.

SAO Henderson confirmed that a first draft will be presented to Council at the second meeting in November.

Cr. Karasiuk referred to a Mastercard payment listed in accounts payable associated with the former Acting SAO. He asked how long charges from the account may continue to appear and whether the credit card has been cancelled or if further payments are expected.

SAO Henderson explained that the SAO's corporate credit card is used for various recurring expenses, including subscriptions and software. During a transition between SAOs, the card remains active temporarily to allow sufficient time to transfer these payments to a new account. He confirmed that Administration is currently completing this process and anticipates that charges to the former Acting SAO's card will cease shortly.

ii. Accounts Paid List

iii. Correspondence

8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

a. Bylaws and Policies

b. Appointments

c. Mayor and Council Round Table

i. Cr. Karasiuk highlighted several upcoming community events and activities. He noted that the Smith TAPP introductory program is taking place at Aurora College, with 58 students participating, including 45 from outside the community. He commended the College for providing engaging opportunities to introduce youth to the skilled trades and welcomed the visiting students to Fort Smith.

He also reminded residents of the upcoming high school volleyball tournament scheduled for the weekend following Thanksgiving, which typically brings 300 to 350 students to the community. He encouraged residents to attend and support the athletes, noting that the tournament runs from Thursday evening through Sunday afternoon, with plans to potentially livestream the final games.

Councillor Karasiuk thanked Town staff for organizing the fish fry as part of the Town's 60th anniversary celebrations. He noted that despite the less favourable weather, the event was well attended and appreciated by those who participated.

He concluded by wishing everyone a safe and happy Thanksgiving, reminding residents to "Gobble till you wobble."

ii. D/M Keizer advised that a three-day meeting regarding the Emergency Management Act is scheduled to take place in Yellowknife the following week. He has been asked to participate virtually while travelling. He also noted that he may attend an additional community association meeting, potentially resulting in four days of virtual meetings.

iii. Cr. Cox noted that he had recently returned from spending time in the bush and was catching up on community matters. He reflected on the recent windstorm, which caused power outages and brought down numerous trees throughout the community. He encouraged residents to assess trees on their properties and consider removing those that may pose a risk. He noted that local resources are available to assist with tree removal and emphasized the importance of proactive maintenance for both power reliability and FireSmart preparedness.

iv. Cr. Benwell expressed appreciation for the installation of new sidewalks throughout the community, commending the quality of the work. She also recognized Lawrie Hobart for her efforts in organizing the upcoming volleyball tournament, acknowledging her dedication to providing opportunities for youth. Additionally, she thanked the Friendship Centre for organizing the Every Child Matters luncheon, noting that it was a well-organized and meaningful community event.

v. Cr. Heaton reported that the Uncle Gabe's Friendship Centre lunch program has reached 80 registered students and reminded motorists to be mindful of children travelling to and from the Centre during lunchtime. She extended her appreciation to Sam Warner and the Northern Store for their generous donation to the lunch

program. She also recognized Hope McNeil for her contributions to organizing bingo events at Uncle Gabe's and wished her well on her upcoming return to Chile.

Cr. Heaton shared that she volunteered for 10 shifts at the animal shelter over the past month and encouraged community members to consider volunteering, whether to assist with feeding or walking the dogs. She emphasized that any amount of time would be greatly appreciated.

She also thanked residents for their donations to the thrift store and reminded donors to ensure items are clean and free of pet hair to help with processing and prevent potential allergic reactions.

Lastly, Cr. Heaton expressed appreciation for the Town's recent fish fry and noted that she was able to distribute some of the leftover food to local Elders.

9. PROCLAMATIONS

10. IN-CAMERA

11. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal)	October 20th, 2026, @ 7 pm, chaired by Cr. Heaton
Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate)	November 3rd, 2026, @ 7 pm, chaired by Cr. Benwell

12. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

 # 26-197 **Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk**
Seconded by: Cr. Benwell

That Mayor Fergusson, Cr. Bathe, Cr. Couvrette, and Cr. Tuckey be excused from the regular meeting of Council on October 6th. 2026.

PASSED

13. QUESTION PERIOD

Mallory Minerson, a local mental health councillor, expressed concerns regarding what she described as an increase in violence, gun-related incidents, and the presence of firearms in the community. She noted that, through her work in corrections and conversations with residents, she has observed growing fear and anxiety surrounding public safety. She referenced a community town hall held in another community that provided residents with an opportunity to discuss safety concerns and explore potential solutions. She suggested that a similar forum in Fort Smith could be beneficial in allowing residents to voice their concerns and work toward restoring a sense of safety. She asked what steps Mayor and Council are taking to address these concerns and help residents feel safe in their community.

SAO Henderson advised that the Mayor has been in discussions with the RCMP over the past week regarding community safety concerns. He noted that the Mayor may be able to provide further information and updates upon her return.

Cr. Cox acknowledged the concerns raised, noting that a resident had recently approached him with similar questions regarding community safety. He advised that he had intended to discuss the matter with the Mayor and recalled that the Thebacha Leadership Council

(TLC) had held similar discussions previously, although he was unsure of the outcomes. He suggested following up on those discussions and potentially reaching out to the Mayor of Inuvik to learn from their approach. Councillor Cox confirmed that he would contact the Mayor by email to raise these concerns and explore possible next steps.

D/M Keizer thanked the community member for bringing forward her concerns regarding public safety, acknowledging that the issue has been a topic of discussion among many residents, including his own family. He agreed with Cr. Cox that the matter should be brought forward to the Thebacha Leadership Council (TLC), emphasizing the importance of working collaboratively with the Town's Indigenous partners to develop solutions that address the needs of the entire community. He recommended that the Town formally raise the concerns with the TLC for further discussion.

Mallory Minerson asked whether the Town could consider organizing a community gathering or town hall in the near future to provide residents with an opportunity to openly discuss their safety concerns and explore potential solutions. She emphasized the importance of taking timely action, noting particular concern for children who may be experiencing fear and anxiety due to recent incidents. She expressed a desire to ensure residents feel supported and that their concerns are being heard and addressed.

Council acknowledged the community's concerns regarding public safety and recognized the importance of providing residents with an opportunity to express their concerns. While supportive of the idea of a community forum, it was emphasized that further consultation with the Mayor, RCMP, Protective Services, Indigenous leadership, and local support agencies would be necessary before committing to an event. Council stressed the importance of ensuring that appropriate resources and professional supports are available to facilitate a meaningful and constructive discussion. Residents were encouraged to continue bringing their concerns forward while Administration and Council consider appropriate next steps.

14. ADJOURNMENT

 # 26-198 **Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk**
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the meeting be adjourned at 7:34 pm.

PASSED

Minutes adopted this 20th day of October 2026.

Dana Fergusson
Mayor

Certified Correct by David Henderson
Senior Administrative Officer