



Corporate Services Standing Committee Meeting June 3rd, 2025

MINUTES

The Corporate Services Standing Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, June 3rd, 2025 @ 7:40 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

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

Regrets:

Staff Present: Tracy Thomas, Senior Administrative Officer
Raveena Brown, Executive Secretary
Sham Jayakodige, Acting Director of Corporate Services

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Fergusson called the meeting to order at 7:48 pm, confirmed quorum, and handed the chair to Cr. Tuckey.

B. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

C. REVIEW

a. Agenda

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That the agenda be adopted as **presented**. Amended to add Meeting Procedures to (G) **Other Business**

PASSED

b. Minutes

Moved by: Cr. Cox
Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

That the minutes from the Corporate Services Standing Committee Meeting on May 6th 2025, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

Mayor Fergusson inquired about an update on the status of HAF funding and whether there is a policy or procedure in place for how applications are accepted or approved.

SAO Thomas noted that the first two parts of the HAF initiatives had a soft launch last week. As of now, there have been no reports of uptake, though she had some informal discussions about it during the Zoning Bylaw meeting and with others around town. She explained that while program guidelines were not formally created, the information is available on the Town's website and was also shared via Facebook. She expects to follow up with a more targeted promotion soon. SAO Thomas added that she hopes to meet with the HAF Committee again within the week to bring forward the next two initiatives, with the aim of including them in the Corporate and Community Services package next week.

c. Vision and Mission

D. DELEGATIONS

E. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. The Corporate Services Director's Report for May



Corporate Services Standing Committee Meeting June 3rd, 2025

SAO Thomas provided an update on staffing and recent activities. The Town is finalizing an offer for the HR Manager position, and interviews for the Director of Corporate Services are underway. Housing is being arranged for both roles, with a request for help in finding a rental for the incoming HR Manager. She noted the team managed operations well during her absence and that payroll was completed without issues. She also attended the CAMMA conference, highlighting its strong turnout and focus on mental health. The Local Government Association contributed \$3,000 toward her travel costs.

- b. Accounts Payable Report
- c. Correspondence

Cr. Couvrette voiced frustration with the GNWT's lack of action on community funding, criticizing the focus on expanding departments in regional centres while municipalities continue to struggle with essential services. He called for collaboration with other communities to push for meaningful investment in local governments.

Mayor Fergusson echoed these concerns following the FCM conference, noting that Prime Minister Harney failed to address direct questions about the municipal funding gap. She expressed uncertainty about how smaller communities like Fort Smith fit into current federal priorities.

Mayor Fergusson will draft a letter to Minister McKay and circulate it to Council for feedback.

F. ADMINISTRATION

- a. Briefing Note – Budget Variance Report as of March 31st, 2025

Moved by:

Seconded by:

That Council accept this first quarter variance report for information.

PASSED

Councillor Karasiuk questioned whether the 9% revenue received by the end of March aligns with past first-quarter trends. SAO Thomas responded that taxation, the Town's primary revenue source, begins in July, and that miscellaneous revenue includes small or irregular items like auction proceeds. She clarified that fines are reported under Protective Services.

Mayor Fergusson raised concern about the low development permit revenue, noting the Lands Department has been busy despite only \$899 reported.

SAO Thomas reminded Council that the report is current to March 31 and about two months behind. She requested that questions be sent in advance to allow staff time to prepare responses.

- b. Briefing Note – Authorization for Direct Awards Under Standing Offer Agreements (SOAs) – Approved Capital Projects

Moved by:

Seconded by:

That Council authorize Administration to proceed with direct awards under established Standing Offer Agreements for goods and services related to Council-approved capital projects, where the costs fall within the approved project budget, without the need for additional Council approval where such awards exceed the SAO's individual signing authority.



Corporate Services Standing Committee Meeting
June 3rd, 2025

SAO Thomas explained that the Town is actively advancing capital projects, using standing offer agreements to avoid delays while remaining within approved budgets. She noted that projects generally proceed without additional approvals as long as any extra costs stay under 10 percent of the total value. For larger projects, this can still be a substantial amount. The standing offers include pre-set fees and rotate among four approved firms, ensuring consistent, experienced service.

Cr. Couvrette supported the use of standing offers for time-sensitive projects but raised concerns about whether issuing contracts over \$50,000 without Council approval aligns with existing policies. He noted the need to distinguish between fast-tracking contracts and maintaining compliance with signing authority rules.

SAO Thomas clarified that all projects using standing offers are already approved in the capital budget and include itemized project management costs. All contracts require dual signatures, including one from a Council member, maintaining oversight. She confirmed the approach adheres to the Town's procurement and spending bylaws.

D/M Keizer also supported the process but stressed the importance of keeping Council informed. He proposed that Administration provide monthly updates on which projects have moved forward under the standing offer system so Council can remain aware and answer public inquiries.

c. Briefing Note – Approval for Riverside Park and Lookout Project Management and Design Services

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Council approve the direct award of the Riverside Park and Lookout Update Project Management and Design Services to Maskwa Engineering Ltd. under the Town's existing Standing Offer Agreement, and authorize Administration to proceed with the project in accordance with the proposed phased approach.

PASSED

d. Briefing Note – Addition of Streetscape Improvements Project to 2025 Capital Plan

Moved by: Cr. Cox
Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Council approves the addition of the Streetscape Improvements Project to the 2025 Capital Plan, with a total budget of \$50,000, funded through the municipal capital budget.

PASSED

Cr. Couvrette asked Administration to confirm whether the items listed, such as benches and other amenities along trails, are still being considered for potential sponsorship opportunities. He noted that there had been previous discussions around generating revenue through community and business sponsorships for such features. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a connection between landscape improvements and the opportunity to bring in additional revenue, even if minor, through sponsorship of these items.



Corporate Services Standing Committee Meeting
June 3rd, 2025

e. Briefing Note – Items recommended for sale in the upcoming auction

Moved by: Cr. Benwell
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council approve the sale of all listed surplus items through the GNWT auction on June 7, 2025.

PASSED

The Town currently lacks a clear policy for disposing of surplus assets. While the CTV Act refers to local procedures, the only existing policy on capital assets defers to procedures that are not well defined. To address this gap, Administration reviewed practices from other communities and consulted accounting standards, finding that past disposals used fair market value and minimum bids, with asset value based on amortization.

Discussion around the sale of the trailer stage prompted broader concerns. D/M Keizer questioned the rationale behind selling a well-used community asset, especially given public interest and pride in its use. He called for more discussion before making a final decision. SAO Thomas noted that staffing shortages and the lack of trained personnel have made it difficult to continue using the stage, and that local interest—including from Salt River First Nation—has been expressed.

Cr. Cox supported the idea of keeping the stage in the community through direct negotiations with local groups, rather than selling it through public auction. He also raised questions about whether training could be done in-house and suggested exploring sealed bids from local organizations as an alternative.

Mayor Fergusson raised concerns about future costs, warning that the Town may have to rent the stage back for community events at high rates. She suggested it may be more cost-effective to invest in staff training and retain the asset.

SAO Thomas confirmed Council could request to exclude the stage from the sale and recommended delaying the decision until the Director of Community Services provides a detailed briefing. If the Town chooses to proceed after that, she advised reaching out to local governments first, with auction remaining a fallback option.

f. Mobile Stage

Moved by: Cr. Cox
Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Administration provide a briefing note outlining the training requirements and alternative options for the disposal of the trailer stage. The briefing note should also include a cost analysis for retaining the stage, an assessment of its current condition, and potential alternatives for the Town should it no longer own a stage.

PASSED

Cr. Couvrette emphasized the importance of putting the training requirements for the trailer stage into proper context. He explained that national standards now require certified personnel to set up such stages, following several tragic incidents in other locations where improperly assembled stages collapsed and caused fatalities. He cautioned against minimizing these requirements, noting that doing so would expose the Town to significant liability. While he acknowledged the stage is a valuable asset, he stressed that if the Town chooses to retain it, it must also commit to ensuring staff are properly trained and certified to reduce risk and uphold public safety.



Corporate Services Standing Committee Meeting June 3rd, 2025

a. Meeting Procedures

Cr. Karasiuk proposed a restructuring of Council's meeting schedule based on his experience at the last regular meeting, where he felt the process was largely repetitive, with Council re-approving motions that had already been passed at standing committee meetings. He noted that under the CTV Act and the Town's procedural bylaw, only one regular Council meeting per month is required.

He suggested a three-month trial, starting in July, to hold two regular Council meetings each month—on the first and third Tuesdays. The first meeting could include items such as Protective Services, the RCMP report, director updates, and any business arising, with motions passed at that meeting considered final. The second Tuesday would be left open for Committee of the Whole or subcommittee meetings as needed. The third Tuesday would focus on Community Services and Municipal Services.

Cr. Karasiuk believed this approach would reduce duplication, increase efficiency, lessen staff workload, and produce some cost savings. He pointed out that these savings could potentially fund other priorities, such as training for the trailer stage or discretionary donations. He emphasized that the proposed structure would maintain flexibility while improving the overall function of Council meetings.

SAO Thomas shared that in her previous experience before coming to Fort Smith, municipalities typically operated with two regular Council meetings per month, with standing committee meetings held only as needed—usually when significant projects or specific issues required deeper discussion. She noted that the first and third Monday or Tuesday model was common practice. She also referenced Hay River's approach, where they hold one standing committee meeting and one regular Council meeting per month, but use the same agenda and pass all motions during the Council meeting. Thomas indicated that this two-meeting model is standard in many communities. She also asked that the trial begin in August when she returns, so it does not add any additional workload on her staff.

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

That Council amend its meeting procedures on a trial basis, beginning in August 2025, to hold two regular Council meetings per month for a period of three months. The regular meetings will be scheduled on the first and third Tuesdays of each month, with both meetings starting at 7:00 p.m. The first Tuesday meeting will include delegations from the RCMP and reports from the Protective Services and Corporate Services Directors. The third Tuesday meeting will include reports from the Municipal Services and Community Services Directors.

PASSED

H. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

I. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

That next Corporate Services Standing Committee meeting be on July 8th, 2025.

J. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson



Corporate Services Standing Committee Meeting
June 3rd, 2025

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:55 pm.