

**Village of Haines Junction  
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes  
April 22, 2026**

Present:  
Mayor Strand (via Zoom)  
Councillor Busche  
Councillor Mackinnon  
Councillor Moore  
Councillor Sundbo

Absent:  
None

CAO Fairbank, Recorder L. Sylvain, Sylvain Human Resource Services (not present)

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

**2. Acknowledgement of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Traditional Territory**

Councillor Busche acknowledged that we are on the traditional territory of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

**3. Adoption of Agenda**

#101-26 It was moved and seconded

**THAT** the agenda be adopted.

Motion #101-26 was **CARRIED**.

**4. Old Business**

a. RTC – Recreation Position Review

b. Recreation and Events Coordinator – Job Description

*CAO Presentation:*

- The review of the recreation position was undertaken from a first-principles perspective, noting that the position was originally approved 2–3 years ago following public feedback. A few months ago, this was brought back to Council, then there were subsequent proposals to increase compensation and expand responsibilities of the position.
- A comparison to other Yukon communities identified that most maintain greater recreation infrastructure and dedicated administrative roles, including communities with smaller populations, while Haines Junction currently has none.
- The ability to maintain full neutrality was noted as challenging due to the operational impacts on staff workload, though an effort was made to present balanced considerations.
- The delivery of recreation-related functions (including facility bookings, event coordination, payments, maintenance requests, and user support) is currently

distributed across multiple staff, resulting in workflow disruptions and reduced efficiency.

- The utilization of municipal recreation facilities (arena, mezzanine, convention centre, Grand Hall, atrium, and lobby) was identified as limited due to the lack of a dedicated position, representing lost opportunities for community benefit and use.
- The supervision of arena staff falls to the Public Works Manager, whose number of direct reports far exceeds recommended levels. Consequently, the creation of a recreation position would redistribute this responsibility and reduce managerial burden.
- The pursuit of external recreation funding is currently minimal due to limited staff capacity, despite the availability of funding opportunities; a dedicated position would provide focus and increase access to these resources.

*Discussion:*

- Council noted that most comparable communities have more recreational facilities, including pools. They observed that Teslin uses a lake-based summer program, while Faro has significantly more facilities. It was noted that Carmacks' former summer pool is now permanently closed.
- Council noted that some other Yukon communities use an online recreation booking system that allow users to view availability and complete reservations without direct staff involvement, including automated features that can prompt staffing and facility requirements based on activity type.
- Council acknowledged that recreational programming and facility operations previously relied more heavily on volunteer technical support for audio-visual and event-related needs.
  - CAO noted that Junction Arts & Music (JAM) continues to provide technical support for complex issues, particularly for live events requiring advanced setup such as live music. He explained that basic AV support requests to staff (e.g., connecting devices, operating projectors, and providing user orientation) continue to occur, with varying levels of user familiarity.
- Council noted a historical shift away from volunteer-driven facility operations and programming, with reduced volunteer availability compared to earlier years.
- Council expressed concern regarding the justification for a full-time recreation position based on current levels of facility use and periodic operational needs. It was suggested that alternative approaches may exist to reduce administrative burden on staff without establishing a full-time position. Council expressed concern about the cost-effectiveness of a recreation position focused primarily on supervising a small number of seasonal arena staff.
- Council noted that supervisory responsibilities for arena staff could potentially be adjusted within existing administrative structures to address workload pressures. It was indicated that a full-time recreation position may be more justifiable if Haines Junction had a pool, or other recreational facilities.
- Council noted that certain recreation-related funding opportunities may not permit the use of grant funds for salary costs, and therefore may not fully offset staffing expenses.

- Council discussed the potential creation of a recreation-related position, with differing views on need and timing. Some members supported the position, noting ongoing declines in volunteerism and the need to adapt to changing community dynamics. They highlighted missed opportunities in grant funding, programming, and event development, and suggested a dedicated role could strengthen coordination, support local organizations, and prepare for future recreation infrastructure. Concerns were also raised about current organizational structure limitations and staff capacity, indicating reassignment of duties may not be feasible.
- Other members expressed caution, noting that volunteerism continues to ebb and flow and that community-led initiatives and fundraising efforts remain active. They raised concerns about adding a new position amid existing financial and staffing pressures and emphasized that operational demands would still require additional support beyond a single role. Alternative approaches were suggested, including incremental steps such as contract support for grants and programming, improvements to booking systems, and exploring internal supervisory or structural adjustments.
- Council also noted the value of obtaining further input from staff to better understand current workload and supervisory capacity. While there was general agreement on the importance of enhancing recreation opportunities, Council remained divided on whether establishing a new position is the appropriate or immediate solution.
- The CAO advised that supervision of recreation-related duties, including oversight of arena staff, represents an incremental workload for staff rather than a critical pressure point. While it does draw on time, it is likely not a tipping point for staff capacity. In response to Council questions, the CAO confirmed that these responsibilities are currently distributed across multiple job descriptions and could be formally reassigned under a new position if established.
- Council raised questions about timing and necessity, noting that while a dedicated role may be required in the future, particularly with the development of a larger recreation facility, it may be premature to create the position now. Concerns were also expressed about whether the proposed wage would attract a qualified candidate and whether staffing decisions should align more closely with confirmed infrastructure development.
  - The CAO acknowledged timing as a valid consideration and noted that a future recreation facility would require a significantly expanded staffing structure, including management and operational roles. The proposed position could either evolve into a more senior role over time or potentially become redundant, depending on how services are structured. The CAO also emphasized the potential value of the role in the interim, including collecting community data, supporting planning efforts, and contributing insight toward future facility design.
- The CAO also expressed concerns about volunteer sustainability, noting anecdotal evidence of burnout, and a lack of progress on recreation partnerships and strategic priorities. The CAO also outlined potential benefits and limitations of the position, including the possibility of increased grant funding for community programming (though not to offset salary costs), and the fact that the role would not address existing

infrastructure gaps or replace technical expertise required for facility design and construction.

- Council also considered alternative approaches, including enhancing direct funding to community groups or leveraging existing programs, and noted financial implications, including the uncertainty of long-term affordability given anticipated future capital and operational pressures associated with new recreation infrastructure (i.e., the pool).
- What are other seasonal lifeguards paid in other Yukon communities (not including Whitehorse)?
  - CAO is unsure of salary ranges for this position.
- Council discussed the cost and practicality of staffing lifeguard positions, noting that qualified candidates are expensive, often in high demand, and may require additional incentives such as housing. It was also observed that many positions in other communities are seasonal or part-time, often filled by students, which affects both cost and long-term staffing feasibility. Concerns were raised about the financial implications of maintaining full-time lifeguard roles year-round.
- Council also reflected on its strategic priorities related to recreation and partnerships, noting that progress is already being made through collaboration on the Healthy Living Centre project, and that advancing these priorities is not solely dependent on creating a new position.
- The CAO steered the discussion towards the overarching idea of foundational values-based considerations, emphasizing that decisions ultimately relate to the level of service Council wishes to provide. He noted that future reports to Council (RTCs) would reflect direction from this discussion. It was emphasized that these considerations involve trade-offs rather than clear yes/no answers, particularly when assessing risks and benefits of expanding recreation services. CAO asked Council: Do municipalities have a role in recreation?
  - Council responded unanimously that municipalities have a role in recreation.
- The CAO prompted Council to consider the appropriate level of municipal responsibility and investment in recreation, framing it as a values-based question.
- Council noted that expectations may vary depending on community demographics, with different recreation needs across age groups and interests. It was also observed that recreation demand differs by activity type, including growing participation among seniors in certain programs. Council identified a need for better demographic data to inform decision-making, as well as interest in comparing recreation roles and responsibilities across other Yukon municipalities, including the types of facilities and services they support and whether recreation requires formal infrastructure or can be delivered through existing community assets.
- Council discussed recreation service delivery beyond facilities, including outdoor versus indoor programming, and noted that existing spaces are frequently used and largely volunteer-driven. Council expressed interest in better understanding facility usage data and gathering direct input from staff on workload impacts. The CAO acknowledged that recreation-related tasks can be disruptive to staff time but confirmed that staff are generally supportive of establishing a recreation position.

- The discussion explored risks and trade-offs of expanding recreation services, including whether increased service levels could require reallocating limited financial resources or introducing new funding sources. Some Council members noted that additional programming could bring added costs beyond staffing, while the CAO clarified that the envisioned role would focus on coordination, support, and grant facilitation, rather than direct program funding.
- Council also considered long-term service planning, particularly in relation to the future Healthy Living Centre, with the view that early investment in a recreation role could help build capacity, secure funding, and inform service levels ahead of increased operational demands.
- Council mentioned the concept of opportunity cost, emphasizing potential risks of delaying action versus acting early to prepare for future needs.

#102-26 It was moved and seconded

**THAT** staff be directed to provide a Report to Council on the statistics of the frequency of use of municipal buildings.

Motion #102-26 was **CARRIED**.

#103-26 It was moved and seconded

**THAT** staff be directed to provide a Report to Council on the impacts to Village of Haines Junction staff and the potential opportunity cost regarding not having a dedicated Recreational position.

Motion #103-26 was **CARRIED**.

## 5. Questions from the Public

- **Pedal Junction** stated that there is likely greater community benefit in establishing the recreation position than not, noting ongoing reliance on volunteers and concerns about volunteer burnout due to individuals carrying multiple responsibilities. Pedal Junction emphasized that a dedicated village staff role could help support, coordinate, and champion recreation across the community and facilities. It was further noted that establishing the position in advance of the Healthy Living Centre would be advantageous, allowing staff to gain experience and build capacity ahead of increased operational demands, rather than attempting to staff multiple roles at once when the facility opens.
- **Seniors/Elders** expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discuss this topic and asked whether local non-profit and user groups currently delivering recreation programming have been consulted regarding the proposed position. It was suggested that these groups may have different needs or preferences depending on how they operate, and clarification was sought on whether they would want additional municipal support or prefer to continue independently, given the diversity in how community programming is currently organized.

- **CAO** asked: As a user group, how do you feel about the idea of a new recreation position?
  - **Seniors/Elders** reported that they currently run extensive programming in the community building four days per week, including exercise classes, games, and monthly meals, serving nearly 100 participants. They noted that existing non-profits are already effectively delivering recreation and questioned whether a recreation director would significantly impact current programming. This group raised concerns that the proposed role could create confusion over responsibilities, as it appears to combine multiple functions. It was suggested that the greater need may be for facilities management rather than recreation programming coordination, which is already being handled by community groups.
- A **member of the public** commented that they supported the creation of a recreation position. They emphasized the need for a dedicated “recreation champion” to support and coordinate volunteers, reduce barriers for community organizers, and strengthen recreation delivery. Recreation is an essential service linked to mental health, youth wellbeing, and social connection, particularly in rural communities where access to services is limited. The speaker framed recreation as contributing to broader community and economic benefits, including attraction and retention of residents, increased service use, and overall community vitality, noting that the cost of the position was relatively modest compared to its potential impact. They suggested that delaying action until future infrastructure (e.g., a pool or health facility) would be a missed opportunity, and that early investment would help build capacity over time. They highlighted the breadth and strength of current volunteers, referencing extensive local programming and organizations, while noting that volunteerism is evolving rather than declining. They noted that not all user groups may require or want support, but many likely would, referencing past community survey feedback showing strong support for such a position.
- Another **member of the public** reflected on long-standing community discussions over approximately 30 years regarding a new recreation position, noting repeated cycles of consideration. They noted that community groups have consistently expressed strong support for the role, citing significant administrative burden currently placed on volunteers who focus on delivering programming, but are required to manage funding applications, scheduling, coordination, and facility logistics. They explained that volunteers are experiencing burnout due to administrative responsibilities that are outside the scope of their roles and are not supported through formal employment protections. They suggested that this has resulted in lost opportunities for programming and participation within the community. A recreation position is a critical coordination and support role, capable of linking user groups, managing logistics, supporting grant applications, and improving access to facilities. The speaker expressed that establishing the position would strengthen both current programming and future preparedness for larger recreation infrastructure, while also improving community capacity, financial opportunities, and overall livability.

- Council sought clarification on whether the proposed recreation position would primarily support administrative coordination across multiple community groups, noting the potential scale of workload involved.
  - The CAO explained that the role would function as a facilitator and navigator of administrative processes, helping community members and groups work through requirements such as insurance, safety considerations, and program setup. The intent described was to reduce duplication of effort by providing consistent guidance on administrative requirements and reducing barriers to launching programs, rather than having each group independently navigate complex processes.
  - **Public** input further emphasized that significant time is currently spent by experienced volunteers learning and re-teaching grant writing, funding navigation, and administrative processes across different groups. It was noted that this reliance on a small number of knowledgeable individuals creates strain and limits capacity for new initiatives. The position was described as a way to lower barriers for new community programming ideas, providing support and guidance so more initiatives can be developed, while still maintaining responsibility within individual groups for initiating and developing their own programs.

## 6. Adjournment

#104-26 It was moved and seconded  
**THAT** the meeting be adjourned.

Motion #104-26 was **CARRIED**

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

  
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Mayor Diane Strand

  
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CAO David Fairbank



