



Current River Ward Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 2, 2026, 7:00 p.m.
North End Community Centre
950 Huron Avenue

1. Current River Ward Meeting 01-2026

Chair: Councillor Andrew Foulds

2. Resource Persons

Cynthia Olsen, Director - Strategy & Engagement
Lori Wiitala, Committee Clerk & Legislative Specialist

3. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed those in attendance, introduced Administration and provided introductory remarks.

There were approximately 27 people in attendance.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Current River Ward meeting held on November 5, 2025, were provided, for information.

Note: the minutes provided in the online agenda and at the meeting were the Minutes of the June 10, 2025 Meeting of Current River Ward; they have now been updated and the Minutes of the November 5, 2025 Meeting of Current River Ward are attached to the meeting agenda, available online at the following link:

<https://pub-thunderbay.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=11461>

5. Enhanced Encampment Response - Ten Part Plan

Director – Strategy & Engagement, Cynthia Olsen, presented on the Enhanced Encampment Response: A Human Rights-Based Community Action Plan, including background, current initiatives, and the proposed ten-part plan.

Director Olsen advised that the increase in visible homelessness began in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when emergency shelter capacity was reduced and public spaces were closed. Physical distancing requirements further limited available space, contributing to an increase in unsheltered individuals. Additional contributing factors included de-carceration, substance use, lack of supportive housing, and insufficient shelter capacity.

Director Olsen noted that homelessness has continued to increase over the past six years, driven by interconnected factors, including rising housing and food costs and limited access to affordable housing. It was further noted that the primary need is increased housing supply, supported by appropriate funding.

Director Olsen advised that Council adopted a Human Rights-Based Approach in 2023, and recent court rulings have confirmed that municipalities cannot remove encampments from public property without providing viable alternative shelter options.

Director Olsen provided an overview of current and planned initiatives, including:

- The development of a Temporary Village Site at 879 Alloy Place, with up to 80 units and on-site supports;
- The identification of up to three designated encampment locations, with approximately 25 tents permitted per site;
- The establishment of an Encampment Response Team to coordinate services and respond to concerns;
- Ongoing collaboration with TBDSSAB and community partners to provide coordinated supports.

In response to questions from Committee, Director Olsen advised:

- Homelessness trends are being experienced across Canada, due in part to rising costs of living and housing shortages;
- A system-based approach is used to determine prioritization for housing and supports;
- Individuals who are unsheltered are prioritized, based on acuity of risk;
- Barriers to accessing services include lack of identification, which is being addressed through existing programs;
- The Temporary Village Site will provide a fixed address, supporting access to services.

6. Ward and City Issues

The Chair provided comments respecting the property municipally known as 791 Arundel Street and clarified that the recent Council decision was to declare the property surplus, and not to approve development.

The Chair noted that the matter was extensively debated at a previous meeting, including discussion related to a potential future rezoning application. Key concerns identified included traffic flow and sight lines, privacy impacts to adjacent properties, pathway connectivity, and stormwater management.

The Chair further advised that no rezoning application has been submitted at this time, and that any future application would be subject to the standard planning process, including public consultation, deputations, and the ability to appeal.

With respect to the broader process, the Chair advised that the City previously considered ten properties through a Call for Proposals process and has historically taken a more passive approach to surplus lands. Proposals were evaluated based on established criteria, including alignment with growth principles, neighbourhood fit, and proponent capacity, with the successful proponent achieving the required evaluation score.

The Chair further advised that the sale of multiple properties, including Arundel Street, will be considered by the Standing Committee – Growth on April 7, 2026, and that Council remains open to both proceeding or not proceeding with the sale, subject to future applications and information.

In response to questions, the Chair advised:

- The Arundel Street matter was not included on the current agenda, as approximately 2.5 hours of discussion occurred at a previous meeting, and an update will be provided when additional information becomes available;
- Should a rezoning application be submitted, it would be subject to the full public process, including deputation opportunities and potential appeal;
- Any proposed development would be required to address matters such as traffic, environmental impacts, water and sewer servicing, and site design, to the satisfaction of Council;
- Agreements of purchase and sale include conditions such as rezoning approval and site plan control, and land transfer does not occur until conditions are met;
- Studies, including traffic and environmental reviews, would be required as part of the planning process.

Concerns were raised regarding the use of the Arundel Street property as existing parkland and an active living corridor, with requests to retain and secure the greenspace and environmental features. The Chair noted that these matters would form part of any future planning review process. The Chair also responded to questions regarding alternative sites, including the Strathcona Golf Course, noting potential challenges including public use, environmental considerations, and increased usage of the facility since COVID-19.

Additional discussion included:

- Concerns respecting access and traffic movement between Arundel Street and adjacent areas, which would be required to meet engineering and safety standards;
- Questions regarding community safety incidents, including recent events in the ward. The Chair advised that the City does not have access to police-specific information and encouraged residents to report concerns directly to the Thunder Bay Police Service;
- Comments regarding encampments and suspected illegal activity, with residents encouraged to report concerns to support enforcement efforts;
- Questions regarding infrastructure repairs, including lighting at the Boulevard Dam, with Administration working with manufacturers to resolve issues;
- Ongoing roadwork coordination, including timing of resurfacing and water/sewer projects, noting that residential roads are a lower priority and that road funding has increased incrementally in recent years;
- Concerns regarding Marina Park fee increases, with the Chair noting the increase was not phased in;
- Clarification respecting Thunder Bay Community Auditorium ticket sales, confirming that in-person box office hours remain available, although limited, and that the facility operates with its own Board and administration, with the City as owner.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:06 p.m.