

**TOWN OF OKOTOKS  
UNADOPTED MINUTES  
FOR THE UNITED WAY/OKOTOKS PARTNERSHIP COMMUNITY INVESTMENT  
SUB-COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING  
HELD WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2026  
IN THE OKOTOKS MUNICIPAL CENTRE COUNCIL CHAMBER**

**COMMITTEE** Jakki Smolcic, Chair  
**MEMBERS PRESENT** Councillor Hallmark  
Michael Cook  
Ankur Gupta  
Pauline Staples

**CALGARY UNITED WAY STAFF PRESENT** Vice President, Community Impact & Partnerships Susan Brooke

**STAFF PRESENT** Community & Social Development Team Leader Sian Anderson  
Community Wellness Specialist Magan Braun  
Community & Social Development Administrator Nikki Hamilton  
Community & Social Development Administrator Bethany Pizani

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Jakki Smolcic called the meeting to order at 8:47 a.m. and provided a traditional land acknowledgement.

**2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**MOTION:** By A. Gupta that the agenda for the March 11, 2026 United Way/Okotoks Partnership Community Investment Sub-Committee Meeting be adopted as presented.

Carried Unanimously

### 3. PRESENTATIONS

#### 3.1 9:00 a.m. - Sheep River Health Trust - Music in the Foothills Program

Sheep River Health Trust Executive Director Andrea Mitchell, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$12,000.00.

Music in the Foothills is a community music therapy program that supports seniors in the Foothills region by reducing social isolation and improving well-being. Led by credentialed music therapists, the program Uses music as a tool to foster connection, joy and meaningful social engagement. It creates accessible opportunities for seniors to connect with others, reducing loneliness and enhancing quality of life.

#### 3.2 9:15 a.m. - Community Chaplain Services Canada - Music and Memory Program

Community Chaplain Services Canada Executive Director Colleen Jantzen, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$7,560.00.

Music and Memory is an inclusive music program where staff and volunteers lead community singing in long-term care homes. Familiar songs from past decades help stimulate memory, spark conversation, and encourage residents to share personal stories. The program supports social connection, engagement, and a sense of community among residents.

#### 3.3 9:30 a.m. - Foothills Country Hospice Society - Community Bereavement Boxes Program

Foothills Country Hospice Society Executive Director Frances Schwartz, and Program Coordinator Sharon Knapp, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$14,655.00.

The Bereavement Box program provides no-cost grief resources to community members in the Foothills who have experienced the loss of a loved one. Launched in 2023, the program delivers curated boxes with coping resources that individuals can use in their own time. The program has seen strong community uptake and continues to grow as the need for grief support increases. The boxes also create a pathway to additional no-cost grief support at Foothills Country Hospice, extending access to the broader community.

3.4 9:45 a.m. - Solace Grief Support Society - Individual Counselling & Intake Coordinator

Solace Grief Support Society Past President Shirley Crawford, and Vice President David Lynn, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$11,800.00.

Solace Grief Support Society offers free group and individual counselling for those experiencing intense grief. This request seeks funding for individual counselling, which is provided in person, by Zoom, or phone. Clients are referred from various sources and choose the number of sessions with their counsellor.

3.5 10:10 a.m. - Rowan House Society - Preventative Education Program

Rowan House Society Community Engagement Coordinator Haleigh Williams, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$7,000.00.

The Preventative Education Program delivers awareness and education in Southern Alberta to support Rowan House Society's mission to break the cycle of domestic violence. It provides school presentations, healthy connection groups, trainings, and community sessions. The program uses an evidence-based approach to empower individuals to recognize abuse, make informed decisions, and share knowledge with others

3.6 10:25 a.m. - Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools - Connections Program

Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools Coordinator of Mental Health Services Aileen Taylor, and Grant Writer Stephanie Wieler, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$8,000.00.

The Connections Program supports vulnerable youth in Christ the Redeemer schools through mentorship, restorative practice and connection to community resources as needed. Primarily for junior high and high school students, it also assists elementary students as needed. Embedded in schools, Connections' Workers address underlying needs, reduce truancy and disengagement, and promote a culture of connection.

3.7 10:40 a.m. - Dr. Morris Gibson (DMG) Fundraising Committee - Sensory Room

Dr. Morris Gibson (DMG) Fundraising Committee President Ashley Coolen and Principal Sarah Clark, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$2,500.00.

Phase 2 of the Sensory Room at Dr. Morris Gibson Elementary expands the existing sensory space with additional tools and resources to support students' emotional regulation, sensory needs, anxiety, and grief. The room will also be available for community grief and therapeutic programs. This phase focuses on responsive, sustainable, and evidence-informed resources while strengthening school and community partnerships.

3.8 10:55 a.m. - Foothills School Division: Outreach Services - Wellness and Well-Being Program

Foothills School Division: Outreach Services District Coordinator – Outreach Services Monica Crane, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$7,500.00.

The Cameron Crossing Wellness and Well-Being Program supports at-risk youth in grades 7–12 who face barriers to success in traditional school settings. such as trauma, mental health challenges, abuse, addiction, or socio-economic factors. The program provides a safe, supportive environment and connects students to community resources, mentorship, volunteer work, employment, arts, trades, and wellness supports. Its focus is on helping students build strengths, access resources, and transition toward positive post-secondary and employment pathways.

3.9 11:20 a.m. - ORENDA Community Youth and Family Society - Growing Strong from the Inside out: Boys Program

ORENDA Community Youth and Family Society Executive Director Jamie Conroy, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$7,500.00.

Growing Strong from the Inside out: Boys Program is a seasonal, 8-week program for boys ages 8–14 that combines movement, mentorship, and emotional regulation to support physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. It provides a safe, structured environment to build confidence, resilience, self-awareness, and healthy relationships, offering an alternative to screen-based coping and promoting positive expressions of masculinity rooted in strength, respect, accountability and connection.

3.10 11:35 a.m. - Inclusion Foothills Association - Family Support Program

Inclusion Foothills Executive Director Vanessa McKenzie and Board Member Pat Macdonald, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$18,000.00.

The Family Support Program provides one-to-one support for individuals with disabilities and their families to foster inclusion and community participation. Services include guidance, system navigation, advocacy, government funding application support, transition planning, referrals, and support groups.

3.11 11:50 a.m. - Okotoks Family Resource Centre

Okotoks Family Resource Centre Specialist Sherri Mullen, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$15,000.00.

Okotoks Family Resource Centre (OFRC) provides individualized services to support residents' health, safety, and social inclusion. Professional staff offer assessment, referral, walk-in support, and outreach to help residents navigate social systems, remove barriers, and access community or government resources. Targeted programs include transportation, tax preparation, and emergency financial and housing support.

### 3.12 12:05 p.m. - KidSport Okotoks - Physical Activity Registration Support

KidSport Board Chair Kyle Jones, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$5,000.00.

KidSport Okotoks Physical Activity Registration Support provides financial assistance to children and youth facing economic barriers to participating in organized sport. Funding supports registration fees and essential equipment, with payments made directly to sport organizations. The program supports a wide range of sports year-round, helping children build skills, confidence, and positive peer relationships.

Recess at 12:05 p.m. Reconvene at 12:50 p.m.

### 3.13 12:50 p.m. - Calgary Catholic Immigration Society - Newcomer Youth Connecting with the Community

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society SWIS/ Settlement Coordinator Laura Suarez, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$1,900.00.

Newcomer Youth Connecting with the Community responds to the need for greater connection and support for newcomer youth in Okotoks. It creates opportunities for youth to share their immigration journeys, build connection and learn about Canadian culture and history, while, promoting understanding, diversity and inclusion in schools and the broader community.

### 3.14 1:05 p.m. - Foothills Advocacy in Motion Society - Okotoks Shredding Program

Foothills Advocacy in Motion Society Fundraising Coordinator Linda Collins; Okotoks Branch Manager Sherry Toomey and Okotoks Branch Team Lead Lisa Hudson, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$3,000.00.

Okotoks Shredding Program provides paid employment and skills training for individuals with disabilities while offering a secure, fee for service document shredding to residents and businesses. Participants gain hands on experience in equipment operation, material sorting, time management, and workplace safety under staff supervision, while supporting environmentally responsible disposal through the Eco-Center. Due to the volume of shredding this program receives, it is in need of a commercial shredder to sustain and expand this program.

3.15 1:20 p.m. - Opening Gaits Therapeutic Riding Society - Opening Gaits Program

Opening Gaits Therapeutic Riding Society Board Member Terri Perrin, presented on the organization's 2026 funding request of \$7,000.00.

Opening Gaits provides therapeutic and adaptive equine programs for people of all abilities, focusing on those with disabilities, developmental delays, mental health challenges, or social barriers. Programs support physical, emotional, and social development through riding, groundwork, and sensory-based activities. Sessions are participant-centered, promoting confidence, resilience, and community connection in a safe and inclusive environment.

3.16 1:35 p.m. - Funding Requests less than \$2,000.00

Community Wellness Specialist Magan Braun, provided information about the following 2026 funding request:

- Okotoks Food Bank Association – Meal Starter Kit
  - Funding Request of \$2,000.00.

**4. CLOSED SESSION**

MOTION: By M. Cook that the meeting go into Closed Session as the matters to be discussed during this portion of the meeting are within one of the exceptions to disclosure in Division 2 or Part I of the *Access to Information Act (ATIA)* at 1:20 p.m.

Carried Unanimously

4.1 Funding Discussion *ATIA* s. 28(1) and 29(1)(g)

In Attendance

Committee members Jakki Smolcic, Councillor Hallmark, Michael Cook, Ankur Gupta, and Pauline Staples

Vice President, Community Impact & Partnerships Susan Brooke

Community & Social Development Team Leader Sian Anderson

Community Wellness Specialist Magan Braun

Community & Social Development Administrator Nikki Hamilton

Community & Social Development Administrator Bethany Pizani

MOTION: By M. Cook that the meeting come out of Closed Session at 2:12 p.m.

Carried Unanimously

**5. MOTION(S) ARISING FROM CLOSED SESSION**

5.1 Sheep River Health Trust - Music in the Foothills Program

MOTION: By P. Staples that Sheep River Health Trust - Music in the Foothills Program not be funded.

Carried Unanimously

5.2 Community Chaplain Services Canada - Music and Memory Program

MOTION: By Councillor Hallmark that Community Chaplain Services Canada - Music and Memory be funded \$7,560.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.3 Foothills Country Hospice Society - Community Bereavement Boxes Program

MOTION: By M. Cook that Foothills Country Hospice Society - Community Bereavement Boxes Program not be funded.

Carried Unanimously

5.4 Solace Grief Support Society - Individual Counselling & Intake Coordinator

MOTION: By A. Gupta that Solace Grief Support Society - Individual Counselling & Intake Coordinator be funded \$11,800.00.  
Carried Unanimously

5.5 Rowan House Society - Preventative Education Program

MOTION: By P. Staples that Rowan House Society - Preventative Education Program be funded \$7,000.00.  
Carried Unanimously

5.6 Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools - Connections Program

MOTION: By Councillor Hallmark that Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools - Connections Program be funded \$8,000.00.  
Carried Unanimously

5.7 Dr. Morris Gibson (DMG) Fundraising Committee - Sensory Room

MOTION: By M. Cook that Dr. Morris Gibson (DMG) Fundraising Committee - Sensory Room be funded \$2,500.00.  
Carried Unanimously

5.8 Foothills School Division: Outreach Services - Wellness and Wellbeing Program

MOTION: By A. Gupta that Foothills School Division Outreach Services - Wellness and Wellbeing Program be funded \$7,500.00.  
Carried Unanimously

5.9 ORENDA Community Youth and Family Society - Growing Strong from the Inside out: Boys Program

MOTION: By P. Staples that ORENDA Community Youth and Family Society - Growing Strong from the Inside out: Boys Program not be funded.  
Carried Unanimously

5.10 Inclusion Foothills Association - Family Support Program

MOTION: By Councillor Hallmark that Inclusion Foothills Association - Family Support Program be funded \$18,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.11 Okotoks Family Resource Centre

MOTION: By M. Cook that Okotoks Family resource Centre be funded \$15,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.12 KidSport Okotoks - Physical Activity Registration Support

MOTION: By A. Gupta that KidSport - Physical Activity Registration Support not be funded.

Carried Unanimously

5.13 Calgary Catholic Immigration Society - Newcomer Youth Connecting with the Community

MOTION: By P. Staples that Calgary Catholic Immigration Society - Newcomer Youth Connecting with the Community be funded \$1,900.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.14 Foothills Advocacy in Motion Society - Okotoks Shredding Program

MOTION: By Councillor Hallmark that Foothills Advocacy in Motion Society - Okotoks Shredding Program be funded \$3,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

5.15 Opening Gaits Therapeutic Riding Society - Opening Gaits Program

MOTION: By M. Cook that Opening Gaits Therapeutic Riding Society - Opening Gaits not be funded.

Carried Unanimously

5.16 Okotoks Food Bank Association – Meal Starter Kit

MOTION: By A. Gupta that Okotoks Food Bank Association – Meal Starter Kit be funded \$2,000.00.

Carried Unanimously

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: By A. Gupta that the March 11, 2026 United Way/Okotoks Partnership Committee Investment Sub-Committee Meeting adjourn at 2:17 p.m.

Carried Unanimously

Unadopted