

From: ["Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca)
To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
CC: ["City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"](#)
["Matthews, Lesley" <lesley.matthews@vancouver.ca>](mailto:lesley.matthews@vancouver.ca)
Date: 5/28/2021 4:06:50 PM
Subject: Memo: RTS 14342 - Continuation of Wedding Program at City Hall
Attachments: Wedding_Memo to Council _May28.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Attached is a memo from Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk, providing a one year status update on the micro-wedding pilot program launched in May 2020. Given the positive feedback and high demand for safe and affordable wedding venues, staff will continue with the wedding program at City Hall on a permanent basis operating under a cost recovery model.

Should you have any questions, please contact Lesley Matthews, Chief of External Relations and Protocol at lesley.matthews@vancouver.ca.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
paul.mochrie@vancouver.ca



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθ̓ŋ̓əm (Musqueam), łíʔəwú 7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

May 28, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Maria Pontikis, Director, Civic Engagement and Communications
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office
Lesley Matthews, Chief, External Relations and Protocol

FROM: Katrina Leckovic
City Clerk

SUBJECT: Continuation of Wedding Program at Vancouver City Hall

RTS #: RTS 14342

PURPOSE

The following memo provides a one year status report on the micro-wedding pilot program launched in May 2020, and outlines a plan to continue an ongoing wedding program at Vancouver City Hall.

BACKGROUND

On May 8, 2020, the City launched a micro-wedding pilot program to fulfill Council's December 18, 2018 motion entitled *Weddings at Vancouver City Hall*.

The pilot program offered 30-minute wedding ceremonies between June 2020 and May 2021 to couples wanting to safely marry at City Hall during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the pilot, couples could invite up to 8 guests including an officiant, witnesses and vendors such as a photographer to attend a ceremony. Couples arranged their own marriage licence, officiant, and any decorations that could be packed in and out within their 30 minute timeslot. At the conclusion of the one-year pilot, 122 wedding ceremonies were made available and 110 ceremonies were booked and paid.

During the pilot, wedding ceremonies took place both outdoors on the Helena Gutteridge Plaza

and indoors in the Council Chamber. Couples paid an \$85 + GST non-refundable fee for outdoor weddings, and a \$275 + GST non-refundable fee for indoor weddings. The \$85 fee was a special fee offered in phase one of the pilot to help couples facing financial difficulties due to the economic impacts of COVID-19, and to attract enough couples to get married at City Hall to “test” the initial phase of the program. The \$275 fee was implemented in December 2020 to better reflect the costs of running the program and the added value to couples for exclusive use of the Council Chamber. Fees included:

- 1) non-exclusive use of the Helena Gutteridge Plaza or exclusive use of the Council Chamber;
- 2) third party liability insurance;
- 3) physical distancing decals for guests, officiants and couples to keep a safe distance from one another as per COVID-19 safety protocols, a document signing table and unlimited time on the City Hall campus to take photos; and
- 4) a dedicated City staff to facilitate bookings, monitor and implement COVID safety and sanitizing procedures, coordinate payment, process user agreements, and manage day-of wedding logistics.

An online survey was sent to couples and officiants after each ceremony. The following table is a summary of the responses received and Appendix A of this memo provides examples of written comments received through the survey:

Outdoor Weddings – Responses	Indoor Weddings – Responses
<p>Of the 30 couples who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% felt that their micro-wedding at City Hall met their expectations • 97% were satisfied or totally satisfied with their micro-wedding at City Hall • 93% felt the \$85 fee was reasonable • 83% agreed that they would pay more for an indoor wedding ceremony at City Hall • 90% felt that 30 minutes was enough time for a ceremony • 97% felt that safe physical distancing protocols were followed at City Hall • 33% would have preferred a weekend date 	<p>Of the 33 couples who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% felt that their micro-wedding at City Hall met their expectations • 100% were satisfied or totally satisfied with their micro-wedding at City Hall • 96% felt the \$275 fee was reasonable • 44% agreed that they would pay more • 88% felt that 30 minutes was enough time for a ceremony • 100% felt that safe physical distancing protocols were followed at City Hall • 32% would have preferred a weekend date
<p>Of the 6 officiants who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% felt that the micro-wedding at City Hall met their expectations • 100% felt that 30 minutes was enough time for a ceremony • 100% felt that safe physical distancing protocols were followed at City Hall • 100% would officiate a wedding ceremony at City Hall again 	<p>Of the 16 officiants who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% felt that the micro-wedding at City Hall met their expectations • 100% were satisfied or totally satisfied • 93% felt that 30 minutes was enough time for a ceremony • 100% felt that safe physical distancing protocols were followed at City Hall • 100% would officiate a wedding ceremony at City Hall again

An initial start up budget of \$25,000 was provided from the 2020 Emerging Priorities Fund to cover the cost of research and program development. Revenue earned from 2020 wedding bookings reached \$13,270 by year end. For the first 5 months of 2021, revenue has reached \$11,370 and is on track to reach \$51,000 by year end with total expenses projected at \$50,700.

Staff may consider raising fees for weddings once restrictions on public gatherings are lifted and larger weddings are permitted at City Hall to ensure that any additional costs associated with larger weddings are recovered. However, every effort will be made to keep fees as low as possible to make weddings affordable and accessible.

DISCUSSION

Ongoing Wedding Program

Given the positive feedback and the high demand for safe, affordable wedding venues, staff recommend continuing the wedding program on a permanent and ongoing basis.

For the remainder of 2021, micro-wedding will continue inside City Hall due to anticipated noise from construction on the Broadway Subway this summer, which will negatively impact outdoor weddings on the Helena Gutteridge Plaza. Once construction concludes on Broadway, outdoor weddings will resume on the Helena Gutteridge Plaza during summer months and inside City Hall during winter months.

The ongoing wedding program will allow couples to:

- **Book 30-minute time slots online at vancouver.ca/weddings to get married outside or inside City Hall.** On average, two dates per month will be made available for wedding ceremonies. Exceptions will include high demand months such as July with an extra date designated for LGBTQAI2S+ during Pride Week. All designated wedding dates will be on non-Council meeting days.
- **Invite up to eight guests including the officiant and witnesses until restrictions on public gatherings are lifted.** Once restrictions are lifted, staff will increase capacity to 20 guests for indoor weddings and 30 for outdoor weddings
- **Obtain a marriage licence prior to the ceremony, and arrange for their own officiant.** Marriage licences are available at the London Drugs Insurance Services on Broadway Street close to City Hall. Couples will continue to arrange their own officiant. Staff investigated the possibility of hiring one officiant to perform weddings at City Hall on a charge-back basis; however, Vital Statistics does not allow its registered Marriage Commissioners to work exclusively for a venue. Religious officiants work under a different set of rules and are permitted to work exclusively for a wedding venue; however, as a civil wedding program, the City will not pursue this option. Furthermore, selecting an officiant is a personal choice made by the couple.
- **Bring sustainable decorations to be set up and removed within the 30-minute time slot.** Confetti, rice or flower petals will not be permitted in the Council Chamber or outside on the Helena Gutteridge Plaza.

- **Pay a booking fee of \$275 + GST for a wedding ceremony at City Hall.** The fee would include exclusive use of the Chamber or non-exclusive use of the Helena Gutteridge Plaza for 30 minutes, basic set up, a document signing table, and third party liability insurance. The fee would also include the services of a City wedding coordinator to safely facilitate the move in and move out of wedding parties throughout the day, tidy and sanitize high-contact areas between ceremonies, and monitor adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols. Payment in full is required to confirm the booking and no refunds would be issued in case of cancellation. Staff will consider raising fees once restrictions on public gatherings are lifted and larger weddings are permitted to ensure that any additional costs associated with larger weddings are recovered.

Available dates for City Hall weddings will be posted on vancouver.ca/weddings six months prior to the scheduled wedding date. For the remainder of 2021, the following dates will be made available:

- **June 3 and 4**
- **July 9, 16 and 26** - July 26 will be a special wedding date exclusively for LGBTQAI2S+ couples to get married at City Hall during Pride Week. It will be organized in partnership with the Vancouver Pride Society. July 26 weddings will take place in the Joe Wai Room to accommodate a large decorative archway provided by Vancouver Pride Society.
- **August 5, 6, 26 and 27** - weddings will take place in the Mayor's Ceremonial Office as the Council Chamber is unavailable due to system upgrades.
- **September 2 and 3**
- **October 8 and 15**
- **November 19**
- **December 10 and 17**

Staff will monitor the program's bookings on a continuous basis. If demand for weddings start to drop, staff will reduce the number of designated dates available to ensure the program remains cost recovery. Conversely, if demand for weddings continues to rise, staff will add dates to meet demand.

Other Considerations

As per the December 2018 motion, staff considered options to work with Technology Services and the Vancouver Park Board to streamline the registration process for weddings; however, the initial programming cost of adding Vancouver City Hall weddings to Park Board's ActiveNet system was estimated at \$5000-\$7000 with ongoing monthly fees. For now, City Hall weddings will utilize its own online registration and payment system. New registration and payment solutions will be sought if supported by continued and adequate demand. ActiveNet will be considered as a solution option with a final determination being driven by costs and cost-recovery. It is the City's preference to leverage existing applications/solutions where possible.

It should be noted that informal coordination between staff that coordinate wedding activities at the Park Board, Civic Theatres and City Hall is taking place to share lessons learned and ensure policies and fees are relatively aligned; however, at this time, there is no plan to formally coordinate the various programs given that each wedding venue has its own unique services and brand.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, staff will continue the micro-wedding program indoors at City Hall to help couples wanting an affordable, reliable, and safe wedding venue during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The pilot filled an immediate need for couples and officiants wanting to continue with wedding plans during this public health emergency, and has demonstrated that a full-scale wedding program is viable and can operate as a low-cost option and on a cost recovery basis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Leckovic', written in a cursive style.

Katrina Leckovic
City Clerk

Appendix A

City Hall micro-wedding testimonials

From wedding couples

- “I feel as though we were explained the rules clearly. Felt safe and comfortable, so I wouldn't change anything, personally.”
- “We felt safe the entire time! The staff on site was excellent and clear in their directions.”
- “Everything was very safe and we didn't have any concerns about that aspect at all.”
- “Thank you Hrisa and the team for making our civil wedding memorable. Everything went better than we expected and we and our guests felt safe. The team ensured to communicate with us about what to expect etc. which helped a lot. We recommend you to continue to give this option for couples. They will love it! And I'm sure it will continue to be successful! Amazing and beautiful venue. We feel lucky that we got to get married at the Vancouver City hall.”
- “As a non-religious person, City Hall offers an alternative institution that makes the day feel more official and special. I'm so happy that I was able to get married at City Hall and I hope it continues to be possible after COVID.”
- “It was just a perfect venue. Intimate and short and sweet. It's exactly what we had wanted for our day and we couldn't have been any happier!”

From officiants

- “I felt the room was excellent. When conducting a wedding in the Council Chambers the seriousness of the commitment is dramatically emphasized which is good. I found the room bright and welcoming.”
- “Your safety protocol was top notch.”
- “I think the experiment is a success and should be continued in the future after the pandemic.”
- “I feel it is a very comfortable situation...and an elegant setting for couples when options are so limited at this time.”
- “They are run SO efficiently and safely”
- “I found the staff detailed, competent, professional and friendly”.
- “I have performed several ceremonies there. Staff members are excellent. I found it to be a very positive experience.”
- “The staff are just lovely, friendly, and accommodating. The council chamber is solemn and respectful. I think this program is a winner here.”
- “I loved working with you and the team! Thanks for having us.”