

Report from Parks, Recreation and Culture Services, Programs and Cultural Services

Date of Report: March 11, 2018

Date of Meeting: March 21, 2018

Report Number: PRCS-B007-2018

File: 68.32.1

Subject: Special Events on City Hall Lawn Policy

Recommendation

That the Budget Standing Committee approve the Special Events on City Hall Lawn Policy (Appendix 1); and

That the Budget Standing Committee refer the Special Events on City Hall Lawn Policy (Appendix 1) to Council for adoption.

Summary

The Special Events on City Hall Lawn Policy provides balance between the doctrine that City Hall belongs to all citizens of St. Catharines, and the controlled appropriate usage of this premier outdoor space for the hosting of special events.

Background

On August 28, 2017 the Budget Standing Committee (BSC) requested that staff create a policy on the public usage of the Civic Square lawn, also known as the lawn directly adjacent and surrounding two sides of City Hall.

Staff had recommended through the 2018 Rates & Fees process that the lawn be available for public rentals between May 15th – October 9th annually, however the BSC rejected these newly proposed fees in the absence of a more comprehensive policy addressing approved usages.

Historically, City Hall lawn has hosted approximately 6-8 special events per year including free yoga classes, a croquet tournament, Christmas tree lighting, radio station live broadcasts and food drives; in addition to numerous flag raising ceremonies which occur throughout the year.

Report

St. Catharines City Hall was built in 1937 and is the administrative hub for the City. Located in the heart of Downtown St. Catharines, its art deco façade and bowling green lawn make it an architectural focal point of the city's core. It is understandable that the lawn adjacent to City Hall would be considered a prominent location to host special events.

The proposed policy provides established guidelines for the appropriate usage of the lawn and is based upon two overarching ideologies:

1. That the space commands a certain reverence for not only its governmental prominence but also the close proximity to several civic war memorials. As such, any events taking place on this property should be modest, respectful and unpretentious. Some activities which are generally acceptable for special events hosted in City parks such as inflatable bouncers, amusement rides, beer tents, and elaborate staging are excluded from this policy.

2. That the usage of this space be limited to special events which are non-profit, charitable, inclusive, community focused and free to the general public. This would eliminate commercial for-profit activities from taking place on the City Hall lawn however, the City does provide alternate downtown locations for such rental requests, such as Market Square.

Next Steps

The Policy be presented to City Council for final approval.

Financial Implications

Not applicable.

Relationship to Strategic Plan

The Special Events on City Hall Lawn Policy is related to the following Strategic Plan goals:


- Economic sustainability goal 2, to be an affordable City for young people, families and retired older adults
- Social sustainability goal 1, to strive for the highest quality of life for all citizens
- Cultural sustainability goal 3, to support cultural festivals and events that build civic pride, encourage local engagement and attract people to the community

Conclusion

The City has identified the need to support community events which build civic pride, encourage local engagement and attract people to the community. The introduction and execution of the Special Events on City Hall Lawn Policy responds to the need to ensure that special events hosted at this location are appropriate and acceptable for the space.

Prepared and Submitted by: Lori Mambella, Manager, Programs and Culture Services

Approved by: Phil Cristi, Director, Parks, Recreation and Culture Services

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Policy:

The City of St. Catharines has identified its need to support special events within the community as they build civic pride, encourage local engagement and attract people to the community.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the appropriate usage of the lawn adjacent and surrounding City Hall. It is the goal of this policy:

- To provide a fair and transparent means for usage approval.
- To ensure that all special events being proposed to be held on the City Hall Lawn (Lawn) meet all safety and logistical standards as required by the City.
- To facilitate scheduling that will protect the Lawn from excessive damage due to overuse.
- To ensure that all special events fully comply with existing municipal by-laws, as amended.

Permitted Uses:


The lawn at City Hall is held in high esteem due to its proximity to the chief administrative building which houses many of our municipal government offices, including the Mayor. City Hall is also the location of many important outdoor civic war memorials. As such, all special events, programming and activities taking place on City Hall lawn property shall:

- Be respectful and civil in nature.
- Be appropriate so as not to damage City property.
- Be mindful of neighbouring downtown businesses and residents.
- Be non-disruptive to City Hall operations.
- Be inclusive and welcoming.

Prohibited Uses:

The following are prohibited under this policy:


- All air supported structures (inflatables, inflatable bouncers, and inflatable screens).
- All amusement devices (including rides, carnival activities).
- All fireworks or pyrotechnics.

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- d) All elevated stages or other temporary structures (i.e. bleachers, platforms).
- e) Use of all barbeques (propane or charcoal), fryers and/or open flames.
- f) All motorized vehicles.
- g) All events requiring a Special Occasion Permit.
- h) Use of portable tents which require staking into the ground (tents with weighted poles which do not require staking are permitted).
- i) Use of all signage which requires staking into the ground.
- j) The sale of beverages in plastic bottles.
- k) All types of temporary fencing.
- l) Portable/temporary washroom facilities.
- m) All animals (other than service animals).

Allocation:

- a) City Hall lawn is available for usage at the discretion of the Director, Parks, Recreation and Culture Services based upon the conditions of the natural turf. This includes but is not limited to sudden weather fluctuations which result in wet, poor, and/or dangerous turf conditions.
- b) A permit may be refused in order to limit the total number of City Hall lawn permits issued annually in accordance with generally accepted natural turf maintenance and reinstatement best practices.
- c) Special events which are non-profit, charitable, community focused will get priority in the allocation of permits; regardless of whether the applicant is an individual, for-profit or not-for-profit entity. Usage of the City Hall lawn for these events will be at no charge however, additional fees may still be applicable including but not limited to insurance costs, damage deposits, reinstatement fees, access to utilities, parking and additional City staffing.
- d) Special events which are for-profit and/or self-promoting in nature where the applicant is an individual or a for-profit commercial entity are not eligible to permit the City Hall lawn.
- e) Any pre-existing contractual and/or legal agreements pertaining to the usage of City Hall lawn by the St. Catharines Royal Croquet Club or others will be honoured.
- f) Flag raising ceremonies are exempt from this policy. Flag raising requests are managed directly through the Mayor's office and do not require a special events permit.

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Permitting:

All special events, programming and activities taking place on the City Hall lawn will require a City issued permit.

- a) The City may attach such terms and conditions to a permit as deemed necessary to ensure public safety, protect City property or maintain the enjoyment of City properties and amenities.
- b) A minimum \$2,000,000 of commercial general liability coverage naming the Corporation of The City of St. Catharines as an additional insured is mandatory. An increased liability limit of \$5,000,000 or more and additional types of insurance coverage may be required at the discretion of the Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture Services.
- c) The Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture Services may also refuse to issue an approval, or may revoke or suspend an approval, or impose a term or condition on the approval, on the grounds that the special event endorses views and ideas that are likely to promote discrimination, contempt or hatred for any person or group on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, skin colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability.
- d) A special event permit application submitted to the City for approval must meet certain criteria to be eligible for a permit, including compatibility with the provisions of municipal, provincial and federal laws as well as in accordance with rules and regulations administered by the Niagara Regional Police, St. Catharines Fire and Emergency Services and the Niagara Region Public Health.
- e) A special event permit application must be received by the City at least 45 days prior to the proposed date of the event.

Accessibility:

The Province of Ontario introduced the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) to ensure that people with a disability have equal opportunities to participate in an independent, dignified and integrated manner. Special event organizers must ensure compliance with all AODA and City Accessibility Policy standards, providing an accessible environment for visitors to the event. This would include well placed and clearly signed accessible parking spaces, appropriate viewing areas and accessible washrooms located on pathways for ease of access.