

Protocol Policy – Book of Condolences and Civic Expressions of Sympathy

ISSUE

The City Administration is currently working on a comprehensive Protocol Policy. The intention is to include a part related to civic expressions of sympathy. What should be included in this portion of the upcoming Protocol Policy?

BACKGROUND

2.1 History

Administration was asked to report back with recommendations for a policy regarding circumstances where a book of condolences might be made available at City Hall.

2.2 Current Status

Administration is currently in the process of preparing a Protocol Policy. This Policy will incorporate the already existing Flag Raising and Proclamations Policy and include further protocols regarding the use of civic square and the provision of letters and resolutions of support by the City. The Protocol Policy could also include the subject of this report, civic expressions of sympathy.

2.3 Public Engagement

No public engagement was undertaken regarding this matter.

2.4 City of Saskatoon's Current Approach

The City currently does not have a written or formal policy regarding civic expressions of sympathy. Expressions of sympathy are currently given on a Councillor's own initiative during public acknowledgements at City Council meetings.

2.5 Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

In considering what should be included in a civic expressions of sympathy protocol, a review of other municipalities was conducted. A number of municipalities were identified that have civic expressions of sympathy protocols. A summary of this review is included at Appendix 1.

OPTIONS

Option 1 – Status Quo

This option would continue the current practice of individual Councillors offering expressions of sympathy as a public acknowledgement at City Council meetings. No additional protocols, such as a process for a book of condolences, would be implemented. The advantage of this option is that there would be no increase in expense nor in time expended by the City Clerk's Office. The disadvantage of this option is that there would be no formal protocol for handling matters dealt with in this report, which would instead continue to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Option 2 – Basic Civic Expression of Sympathy Protocol

A protocol reflecting this option has been drafted and is attached at Appendix 2. Key aspects include:

- On the death of a current Mayor or Councillor or former Mayor:
 - With the consent of the immediate family, a book of condolences will be displayed at City Hall in a prominent location as soon as practicable following the death for a signing period of seven days and will be provided to the family following seven days.
 - The book of condolences will be displayed with a floral arrangement and the latest Council photograph of the deceased.
 - The Mayor and City Manager shall each write a letter of sympathy to the immediate family.
 - Flags will be lowered to half mast in accordance with the Flag Raising and Proclamations Protocol.
 - A floral arrangement and a City flag will be provided to the immediate family.
- On the death of a former Councillor:
 - The Mayor and City Manager shall each write a letter of sympathy to the immediate family.
 - A floral arrangement will be provided to the immediate family.
- Where possible, a public acknowledgement will be made at the next reasonably available City Council meeting following the public funeral or memorial service of a current or former Mayor or Councillor.
- A public acknowledgement may be made upon the death of a prominent public figure or City employee in accordance with the current practice.
- The City Clerk can vary the procedure where necessary to fit a particular situation.

This option provides a basic framework for protocol upon the death of a current or former Mayor or Councillor, City employee or public figure. The City Clerk will be generally responsible for administering this portion of the Protocol Policy and it is within the City Clerks Office's current capacity to achieve.

The advantage of this option is that it will set in place a protocol for the City to implement which will ensure consistency in dealing with the matters dealt with in this report. The disadvantage is that implementing the protocol will require more time and financial resources than the status quo, though these requirements will likely be minor and the need to implement the protocol will likely be fairly uncommon.

Option 3 – Civic Expressions of Sympathy Policy with Additional Content

This option includes the potential to add further content to the basic protocol described in option 2:

- (a) Biography – the protocol could include requiring the Administration to prepare a short biography of the Mayor or Councillor to be displayed with the book of condolences.
- (b) Display at Current Mayor or Councillor’s Council Seat – the protocol could offer that a floral display be placed at the Council seat of the deceased for the next City Council Meeting and any Committee meetings on which the deceased sat.
- (c) Official Representation at Funeral or Memorial Service – the protocol could offer that a member of City Council and the City Manager or designate attend the funeral or memorial service of a deceased current Mayor or Councillor or former Mayor if permitted by the immediate family.

The addition of further services offered as part of protocol increases the depth of the City’s response to a tragic or solemn time. However, although costs associated with these protocols are minimal and reflective of the public service of the individual, additional protocols will impact resources required of City Council and/or Administration.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend to City Council that Option 2 – Basic Civic Expression of Sympathy Protocol be approved for inclusion in the Protocol Policy.

RATIONALE

Option 2 is recommended as a baseline policy that provides consistency and is achievable with current resources. Options 1 and 3 may lead to inconsistency and therefore subsequent inadvertent perceptions of disrespect, such as through unintentional and unavoidable variances in the services provided to different individuals and, are therefore, not recommended. The City Clerk will have discretion to accommodate unique situations; for example, where the passing of a former Councillor occurs out of the public eye. Likewise, any chosen policy will, where possible, reflect the surviving family’s requests.

APPENDICES

1. Municipal Scan
2. Draft Policy Incorporating Option 2

Report Approval

Written by: Erik Agrey, Solicitor
Reviewed by: Adam Tittermore, City Clerk
Jeff Jorgenson, City Manager
Approved by: Cindy Yelland, City Solicitor

Admin Report - Protocol Policy – Book of Condolences and Civic Expressions of Sympathy.docx