

Going to the Chapel of Logs? ? Petch House could soon host wedding services

By Brock Weir

As far as local wedding venues go, it is probably going to be Aurora's most rustic option ? but maybe what Petch House currently lacks in electricity and plumbing will be made up by charm?

The Petch Log House, one of Aurora's oldest buildings, has been put forward a venue for civil marriage ceremonies, following a motion from Councillor Tom Mrakas.

In his motion, Councillor Mrakas said the historic home, which was reconstructed behind the Aurora Seniors' Centre in 2014, after over a century on what is now the site of the Walmart SmartCentres plaza near Highway 404 and a further decade mouldering on planks near Leslie and Wellington, was ?underutilized.?

His motion called on staff to investigate the feasibility and costs for Petch House to be used for marriage services, or as a wedding chapel, an option he hoped to have firmed up by May.

?The Petch House has been empty for a while, since it has been moved, fixed and cleaned up and put back together,? he said. ?I know there have been many ideas put forward [like] a tourist info centre, but I do remember back in the beginning that some thought it should be used as firewood. Those minds changed after a while when they actually saw how beautiful it is.?

But, the Town began offering marriage services in 2015 and, since then, he contended he always saw Petch House as a ?wonderful? place for those marriages to be held ? as an alternative to Council Chambers, where these ceremonies currently take place.

?I think it is a good way of creating revenue and I think it is a good use of it because it doesn't need plumbing, which I think was a big obstacle with a lot of the ideas that were coming forward ? the cost of running that plumbing throughout the building was an issue. I think that is a very inexpensive cost-efficient way of utilizing the Petch House. I think it is something that will draw attention to the Town and I think that could be promoted, will catch on and be well-used.?

Exploring this possibility was an idea supported by Council although the lack of plumbing and electricity still raises eyebrows.

?I think it is a great idea, but I am uncomfortable with not having a washroom,? said Councillor Wendy Gaertner, noting the closest washroom facility is in the nearby Seniors' Centre. ?We have been over this many times. I don't recall how much [plumbing] would have cost when we looked at this the last time.?

Whether or not a washroom is needed, or whether the facilities at the Centre can be used, is an issue which will be explored in the feasibility report.

?It is in close proximity to the Seniors' Centre, so that if people needed to go to the washroom, depending on when the ceremonies are, and they are generally held on Friday afternoons, the Centre is open so there would be public access to those washrooms,? said Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Operations. ?I believe it is depending on what the uses are whether or not you need a washroom and how many people are occupying that space.?

Councillor John Abel had these concerns as well, asking for information to come back on the current uptake on municipally-held marriage ceremonies, how it can be promoted, how the lack of washrooms and a bridal change room can be addressed, and ventured Victoria Hall might be a more viable venue.

?The beauty of using Petch House for marriage services is we set the terms of when we do them, how many times we do them,? said Councillor Mrakas. ?By all means this doesn't mean that all of Petch House would be used for is marriage services. The reason this is before us is staff mentioned to me, and I have been bringing this up constantly, is that it would be favourable if a motion was put in front [for direction from] Council to allow Petch House to be permitted for this purpose. It can be permitted today.

?This is just one thing the Petch House can be used for and I think there is overwhelming support around the table. I look forward to the report coming back in May.?