



Memo

To: Whitewater City Council

From: Elizabeth Thelen, Director Whitewater University Innovation Center

cc: Tech Park Board

Date: October 11, 2023 (City Council Meeting on 10/17/2023)

Re: Whitewater University Innovation Center MOU / structure adjustments

What: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Whitewater University Technology Park Board and University of Wisconsin Whitewater concerning the use and operations of the Whitewater Innovation Center and the Technology Park.

Brief History:

- 2008 - Feasibility Study
- 2009 - EDA grant awarded and Articles of Incorporation
- 2011 - Innovation Center opened
- 2012 - Final MOUs, reviewed and signed through the years
- 2022 - Director Mark Johnson resigned after 8 years; January 2023 Elizabeth Thelen started
- 2023 - The city and UWW extended the current MOU until October 31st due to the new city manager and new chancellor. (Provided)
 - There is 2nd MOU between the City of Whitewater (including the CDA) and the Whitewater University Technology Park.

Ask for consideration:

1. Change the operations of the building, owned by the city, to the city. This includes items such as lease issuing, tracking, key management, maintenance, security, budget, coordinate IT needs, mailboxes (CESA), work with CDA and tech park land development. (Approximately 10 hours /

week; estimate of \$ 20,000/year). UW Whitewater keeps and expands the commitment to Innovation in Whitewater and an office in the innovation center.

- a. At least 2 offices of the 4 offices designated to UWW as part of the current MOU can go back into the pool of space available to rent. (Estimate of \$20,000 / year + a 3rd larger office space available at \$15,000 / year)
 - b. Office / cubicle space as needed for operations.
 - c. UWW will continue and grow programing, regional/state events, and connections to talent- both students and faculty; in addition, UWW will bring more efforts in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship ecosystem to the city and immediate region; and, can assist the city with business retention and expansion in the Tech Park
2. Consider changing, merging or eliminating the 2nd MOU and only have one MOU with City, UW Whitewater and clarify the CDA's role and the role of the Technology Park Board.

Why: 2023 is a new time with new leadership in a turbulent economy. There are challenges and opportunities everywhere. We need to reorganize to capture and create our future. This includes having the Director, funded by UWW, focus on those opportunities, clarify our winning aspiration and get transformative results. This is done by focusing on the business, outreach, programming and our offer; not working on the property management and necessary transactional activities in the business operations.

We see this as a perfect time to adjust and restructure the centers' operations and increase the focus on Innovation and Entrepreneurship here. The center and UWW is starting a new growth curve for innovation and entrepreneurship in Whitewater. UWW is committed to innovation in Whitewater and already shaping how this gets accomplished.

When: Extend the current MOU until December 30, 2023. We finalize the details and approve a new MOU and structure by December 13th and continue and expand business in January 2024.

Impact: The city will manage its asset, the building. The University will manage its assets, the students, programs, and faculty/staff. The customers of innovation services and the center will be clear on what we do and how we all get results. Protecting the legacy of the center is vital so it sustains into the future.

Recommended next steps:

1. City discusses and approves the change – October 17
2. Extend the extension by 3 months – October 31/ November 1.
3. Finalize MOU and structure – October through December
 - a. November City Council meeting
 - b. October 25 and December 13 Tech Park Board meeting
 - c. October, November, December innovation core team
4. Start new structure – January 1, 2024