



Council Agenda Item

Meeting Date: September 1, 2026

Agenda Item: Review, Discuss, and direct staff regarding the Community Stars Gala

Staff Contact (name, email, phone): Becky Magestro bmagestro@whitewater-wi.gov 262-473-0101

BACKGROUND

(Enter the who, what, when, where, why)

The 2026 Community Stars Gala took place on August 14, 2026, at the Whitewater Public Library. Hosting the event at the library provided an opportunity to showcase the newly renovated facility and welcome community members into the updated space.

Approximately 90 people attended the Gala, including board and commission members, nominees, award recipients, family members, community partners, elected officials, volunteers, and guests. The evening also featured entertainment from our own Whitewater Parks & Recreation program, Baile Folklórico, which added a special local and cultural element to the celebration.

The Community Stars Gala was created as an opportunity to recognize and thank residents who volunteer their time and expertise by serving on the City's boards, commissions, and committees, while also celebrating individuals and families through the Community Stars Awards. Both elements have been part of the event, with the intent of honoring the many ways people contribute to Whitewater through public service, volunteerism, leadership, generosity, and community involvement.

For 2026, the nomination and award process was updated. Six award categories were established: Preservation Protector, Difference Maker, Community Champion, Volunteer of the Year, Youth Champion, and the James D. Allen Service Award. The Gala Committee reviewed nominations and, when appropriate, placed nominees into the category that best reflected their contributions and the overall intent of the Community Stars program.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS – COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(Dates, committees, action taken)

FINANCIAL IMPACT

(If none, state N/A)

Council budget - \$10,000.00

Catering-Hoffman House- \$5802.03

Awards- \$522.68

Soda- \$41.11

Decorations- \$ 894.84

Donation to Dancers- \$500.00

Total of - \$7760.66

Donation of alcohol- \$156.35

Remaining- \$2239.34

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

As the Community Stars Gala has evolved, staff believe it is a good time to seek Council direction on the future of the event. While the Community Stars Awards recognize outstanding community service, the Gala is also intended to recognize residents who volunteer on the City’s boards, commissions, and committees. Staff would like Council’s input on whether the current format provides the right balance.

Because Council members also serve on many of these boards and commissions, please consider what type of recognition the volunteers you serve with would find meaningful.

Staff also explored a joint recognition event with the Whitewater Unified School District and UW–Whitewater. After further discussion, it became clear that each organization has different goals for recognizing volunteers, and a combined event may not be the best fit at this time.

Council Guidance Requested

Staff is seeking Council direction on the following:

- Should the Gala continue annually in its current format or be held less frequently?
- What type of recognition would board, commission, and committee volunteers value?
- Are there other changes Council would like staff to consider?

Staff is not recommending a specific option at this time. The goal is to understand Council’s vision and determine the most meaningful way to recognize those who serve our community.

ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED (If none, state N/A)
--

n/a
