

## MEMORANDUM

To: Landmarks Commission

From: Kevin Boehm, Director of Parks, Recreation & Facilities

Date: December 3, 2025

Subject: Historical Bookcases from White Memorial Library

---

### **Background**

For several years, I have been working to obtain permission from the Landmarks Commission to dispose of multiple large wooden bookcases originating from the historic White Memorial Library and previously designated as historical property. These bookcases were housed in the basement of the Old Armory, where they sustained extensive damage from long-term storage, repeated movement, and water exposure.

### **Assessment by Library Director**

In an effort to determine whether the bookcases could be preserved or repurposed, I contacted Diane, Director of the current Whitewater Public Library. Staff moved the bookcases out of storage for her review. After inspection, she determined that they were not in a condition that warranted repair or investment for installation at the current library. Staff then returned the bookcases to storage. It is important to note that moving these extremely heavy and cumbersome units even twice caused additional structural damage to their already fragile condition.

### **Outreach to Anderson Library – Initial and Recent Attempts**

Council Member Orin Smith previously reached out to the Anderson Library at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater, which expressed interest in acquiring one of the pieces. Staff again moved the bookcases out for viewing, but no one from the university came to inspect them despite being advised to do so given their deteriorated state.

Most recently, Council Member Smith contacted the Anderson Library a second time, and they again agreed they would take one of the bookcases. They scheduled a time to come and inspect the pieces prior to taking possession. It was during the

---

coordination of this visit that both they and I learned the bookcases had already been disposed of following the flood damage described below.

### **Flood Damage and Final Condition**

Due to limited workspace in the Armory, I instructed staff to move the bookcases to a storage facility located on City-owned farm property. However, the bookcases remained in the Armory work area, which subsequently flooded during a heavy rain event this past summer. Several feet of water entered the space, causing severe additional damage to the already compromised bookcases.

Based on the combined impact of long-term deterioration, repeated moves, structural weakening, and major water damage, staff determined the bookcases were beyond repair and disposed of them. Given their condition prior to the flood and the extent of the final water damage, I concur with their decision.

### **Remaining Reconstructed Bookcases**

It is also important to note that two bookcases remain in use within City facilities. Years ago, staff took parts and pieces from several of the original historic bookcases to construct two usable units. These reconstructed bookcases are currently located in the Finance Director's office and remain intact.

### **Conclusion**

While efforts have been made over several years to identify potential avenues for preservation or reuse, the historical bookcases ultimately deteriorated beyond repair. Multiple attempts to find a suitable recipient—including outreach to both the public library and the Anderson Library—were unsuccessful due to the condition of the items. The final flooding rendered them unsalvageable.

Based on their significant structural degradation and irreversible water damage, I agree with the staff's decision to dispose of the bookcases.