

Date: October 2, 2025

To: Common Council

From: Rachelle Blitch, Director of Financial and Administrative Services

Re: UW-W Parking MOU

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UW–Whitewater and the City of Whitewater provides for 122 parking spaces on Prince and Prairie Streets, with an annual lease amount of \$45,000. The most recent agreement, signed in August 2024, was structured as a one-year term to allow staff additional time to review and address details within the MOU. The MOU expired on August 31, 2025, however, a 90-day extension was approved by Council on September 2, 2025.

The original concern centered on ensuring public access. We confirmed with the university that members of the public may park in these spaces by purchasing a \$5 day pass online.

This information was shared with the Finance Committee at its September 23rd meeting, where concerns were raised that the lease amount paid to the City has remained unchanged for several years. In the attached email, Brenda Jones noted that the university is currently operating at a loss of approximately \$16,000 and that increasing its costs under the MOU would not be in the university's best interest.

The Committee also expressed interest in further exploring the potential costs and feasibility of implementing parking meters or mobile payment apps, in order to evaluate whether this may be a viable option for the City moving forward.

Staff recommend approval of the five-year agreement as originally presented by UWW. However, if there remains a desire by the full governing body to explore alternative parking options, city staff recommend at least one year to adequately research and evaluate those options before implementation.

Additionally, Council should weigh the recent and ongoing increases in stormwater utility rates. These are mandatory costs that the University must bear, unlike discretionary spending areas such as external MOUs where flexibility is limited. For this reason, staff believe it is more prudent to remain focused on a methodologically sound stormwater utility, with UW–Whitewater as one of the largest contributing ratepayers, rather than delaying a relatively minor MOU over comparatively marginal discretionary revenues. If the utility is not addressed, those costs will ultimately be absorbed by the general taxpayers.

As we move forward with these negotiations, the City Manager asked us to keep in mind that we often hear from the public and from elected officials the importance of working constructively with our community institutions. In that spirit, staff engaged the University as a valued local partner, not as a large corporation renting tower space.