



Park Board Agenda Item

Meeting Date:	May 20, 2026
Agenda Item:	Update on Food Pantry Lease
Staff Contact (name, email, phone):	Kevin Boehm, kboehm@whitewater-wi.gov , 262-473-0122

BACKGROUND

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

The City of Whitewater currently provides facility space to several organizations within City-owned buildings, all of which are 501(c)(3) organizations. These include:

- Whitewater Arts Alliance – White Building
- Whitewater Chamber of Commerce – White Building
- Whitewater Community Food Pantry – Armory Building
- Whitewater Historical Society – Train Depot

The City does allow certain non-profit and partner organizations to utilize facilities on a limited or occasional basis (such as meetings, events, or community programming). However, this differs from ongoing, full-time occupancy of City-owned space.

Full-time use involves dedicated space, utilities, maintenance, and operational impacts to City facilities.

The current lack of a formal lease agreement and rental structure for the Whitewater Community Food Pantry represents an inconsistency in how City facilities are managed. Establishing a consistent approach across all City-owned buildings is necessary to ensure equitable treatment and clear expectations for all organizations.

Operational and Maintenance Considerations

Ongoing, full-time use of City facilities results in measurable maintenance and repair impacts.

At the Armory building, the City has incurred multiple elevator repair expenses associated with heavy and frequent use beyond typical passenger operations, including the transport of materials using carts, trolleys, and similar equipment.

Documented repair costs include:

- June 7, 2024: \$595.25
- September 2, 2024: \$1,241.00
- February 24, 2025: \$2,186.75

The total cost of these repairs is \$4,023.00. These costs exceed typical baseline maintenance and are absorbed within City facility budgets, creating additional financial impacts. These costs reflect the type of use occurring within the facility, including activities that place demands on infrastructure beyond typical passenger-oriented operations.

Policy Direction

The City is working to improve consistency in the management of public assets across all City-owned buildings.

As part of this effort, the City is requesting that organizations utilizing City-owned facilities on a full-time or exclusive basis enter into formal lease agreements that include rental terms.

This approach is intended to:

- Promote consistency across all City facilities
- Ensure equitable treatment among community organizations
- Provide clear documentation of facility use
- Align with standard municipal practices for managing public property

May 7, 2026 Staff received correspondence from representatives of the Whitewater Community Food Pantry regarding the proposed relocation to the first-floor “kitchen” area. In the correspondence, the Food Pantry expressed concerns related to available operational space, patron waiting and registration areas, volunteer workspace needs, storage and display limitations, and environmental conditions associated with the vestibule area. The Food Pantry also requested that Board members visit the current facility layout and proposed first-floor location to better understand operational considerations prior to making a final recommendation.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS – COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(Dates, committees, action taken)

At its April 15, 2026 meeting, the Park Board discussed the proposed food pantry lease with representatives from the Whitewater Food Pantry and directed staff to explore an alternative location within the building. Specifically, the Board recommended evaluating relocation of the pantry to the first-floor existing “kitchen” space, which would eliminate the need for costly elevator repairs. The Board also directed staff to obtain cost estimates for removing existing cabinets and fixtures and installing a separate electrical service to make the space functional for pantry operations, while also exploring opportunities for donated labor and materials to help offset project costs.

The Park Board additionally recommended that the City develop a formal policy governing long-term use of City facilities, including consistent standards for lease terms, rental rates, reduced-rate considerations, and criteria for free use of City-owned spaces.

Following the Park Board discussion, the Common Council reviewed the matter and directed staff to defer any revenue-related decisions associated with the Whitewater Food Pantry space at this time. Council further directed staff to continue evaluating occupancy of the proposed first-floor location, including development of associated costs and policy considerations, and to return the item for further consideration no later than the second Council meeting in June.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

(If none, state N/A)

Staff obtained two electrical estimates associated with potential occupancy options for the Whitewater Food Pantry.

The first estimate reflects costs associated with modifying the pantry's existing second-floor location to allow for separate electrical monitoring and billing. This option would require installation of a separate kilowatt demand meter and transfer of multiple circuits to isolate pantry electrical usage. The estimated cost for this work is \$3,832. In addition to the electrical work, continued use of the second-floor space would maintain reliance on the elevator, including associated maintenance and long-term repair considerations.

The second and less expensive option involves relocating the pantry to the first-floor existing "kitchen" space. Because this area is already served by a separate electrical circuit, modifications would be more limited and primarily involve installation of a kilowatt demand meter and additional outlet modifications necessary for pantry operations. The estimated cost for this work is \$1,332. Under this approach, City staff would complete demolition and removal of the existing kitchen cabinets and fixtures, reducing additional project costs associated with preparing the space.

Under either option, ongoing staff administration would be required to monitor and bill electrical usage. This would include monthly meter readings by staff, calculation of electrical usage based on the City's utility rates, and preparation of invoices for reimbursement of utility costs.

Additional costs associated with preparing the first-floor "kitchen" space for pantry operations, including any future remodeling or operational modifications, remain unknown at this time. While there has been discussion regarding potential donated labor and materials, the availability and extent of those contributions cannot currently be guaranteed. If donations do not materialize, no dedicated funding source has been identified for additional improvements.

Further consideration should also be given to the continued modification of a recreation facility that already experiences limitations due to a lack of programmable space. Allocating additional space for long-term dedicated use may further reduce flexibility for recreational programming and community activities.

The full financial impact of ongoing occupancy is also difficult to quantify with precision, as utilities and certain operational costs are shared across the entire facility. As a result, isolating exact costs attributable to individual users is not entirely feasible. However, continuous full-time occupancy does contribute to overall building expenses and operational impacts related to maintenance, utilities, staffing, and facility infrastructure.

Since the previous meeting, the elevator has required repair service on two separate occasions related to damage to the lower door rollers. While staff cannot definitively attribute the cause of the damage to food pantry operations, the pantry's use represents the primary operational use of the elevator beyond normal minimal public foot traffic, including regular cart transportation associated with pantry activities. Costs associated with these recent repairs are still being compiled.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff is seeking direction from the Park Board regarding the future occupancy arrangement for the Whitewater Community Food Pantry within the Armory building and whether the Board would like to make a recommendation to the Common Council.

Potential options for Board consideration include, but are not limited to, the following:

A. Enter into the lease agreement as presented or modify the proposed lease agreement and maintain the current second-floor pantry location.

B. Maintain the current second-floor pantry location and establish a formal lease agreement documenting occupancy expectations and responsibilities, with no direct financial contribution beyond existing arrangements.

C. Maintain the current second-floor pantry location with the Food Pantry responsible for reimbursement of electrical usage associated with pantry operations.

D. Maintain the current second-floor pantry location with the Food Pantry responsible for reimbursement of electrical usage and consideration of a proportional contribution toward elevator maintenance and repair costs associated with operational use of the elevator.

E. Relocate the Food Pantry to the first-floor existing “kitchen” area, with the Food Pantry responsible for reimbursement of electrical usage associated with pantry operations. Should relocation occur, additional consideration should be given to maintaining the appearance, organization, functionality, and multi-use nature of the first-floor recreation facility space.

F. Any additional option or recommendation as determined appropriate by the Park Board.

Staff also notes that the City currently charges rent or usage fees for similar long-term use of City-owned facilities. Consideration should be given to maintaining consistency, fairness, and equity among organizations utilizing City spaces, as well as broader policy implications related to long-term occupancy arrangements.

Additionally, staff notes that providing subsidized or no-cost occupancy arrangements to one organization may create expectations for similar consideration from other community service and nonprofit organizations operating within the City. As the City evaluates long-term use of public facilities, consideration should be given to maintaining consistency, fairness, and equity in how support and occupancy arrangements are applied across organizations.

ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED

(If none, state N/A)

Proposed Lease agreement

Electrical Quote for Kitchen Area

Electrical Quote for existing Food Pantry Area
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Letter from Food Pantry
