

Whitewater City Council Visioning Meeting

May 14, 2026 – Summary Notes

1. Motivation for Serving / Desired Impact

Orin Artsmith – Wants to continue creating a different and more inclusive development experience within the community and support renter representation.

Gavin Kelleher – Enjoys representing the student seat and ensuring student voices are heard and engaged.

Steven Sahyun – Interested in maintaining momentum and preserving progress within the City.

Brian Schanen – Wants to continue learning about property values and taxes, governance, and the role the City plays in shaping community development.

Patrick Singer – Enjoys helping solve problems for residents and wants to help the community continue moving in a positive direction. Values the opportunity to assist residents and work collaboratively with staff and Council.

Neil Hicks – Wants broader representation and engagement, particularly involving elderly residents and individuals who may not traditionally participate in civic discussions.

2. Top Priorities for the Community

Gavin Kelleher

- Strengthen community relationships and municipal identity.
- Continue improving City-University relations.
- Increase accountability for tenants and landlords.

Steven Sahyun

- Improve opportunities and amenities that encourage UW-Whitewater students to remain in Whitewater after graduation.
- Focus on taxpayer relief and responsible capital improvement planning.
- Support long-term resiliency initiatives.

Patrick Singer

- Encourage downtown revitalization and redevelopment.
- Address affordability and rising costs while remaining competitive with surrounding communities.
- Improve pedestrian safety and walkability.
- Continue focusing on transportation and infrastructure connections.

Neil Hicks

- Continue focusing on safety and stronger neighborhood relations.
- Address nuisance and code enforcement concerns including weeds, vehicles, and property maintenance.

Brian Schanen

- Promote consistency and fairness in enforcement efforts.

- Focus on what the City can realistically accomplish and execute effectively.

Orin Artsmith

- Continue housing development efforts.
- Encourage business and downtown growth.
- Improve community engagement and visibility of opportunities.
- Expand resources related to mental health and community wellness.

Mike Smith

- Downtown
- Downtown
- Downtown

3. Opportunities & Challenges Facing the City

Patrick Singer

- Continue finding ways to make Whitewater attractive and desirable for residents and employers.
- Maintain competitiveness with neighboring communities.
- Build stronger relationships with developers and investors.
- Address transportation and regional mobility challenges.

Gavin Kelleher

- Student experience and retention remain critical to the City's future success.

Steven Sahyun

- Continue addressing parking, growth, and redevelopment challenges.
- Position Whitewater as a regional center for opportunity and activity.

Neil Hicks

- Balance growth and development while maintaining quality jobs and a healthy housing mix.

Orin Artsmith

- Continue balancing housing growth with business development.
- Increase wage opportunities while maintaining affordability.
- Expand entertainment and recreation opportunities.
- Encourage collaboration between organizations and institutions.

4. Administration Support & Communication

Brian Schanen

- Continue fostering positive Council relationships and one-on-one communication opportunities.
- Continue using thoughtful and collaborative approaches.

Patrick Singer

- Increase socialization and less formal interaction opportunities to strengthen communication and teamwork.
- Continue strengthening relationships with community institutions.

Neil Hicks

- Continue encouraging collaborative work sessions and opportunities to better understand differing perspectives.
- Encourage Council visibility within the community and local businesses.

Orin Artsmith

- Continue improving communications and making City information easier to access.
- Increase transparency and improve website usability.

- Continue making staff reports accessible and helpful.

Steve Sayhun

- Improve website searchability and access to documents.
- Continue one-on-one conversations and outreach.

Neil Hicks

- Improve website functionality and communication tools.
- Continue outreach to businesses and community partners.

5. Meaningful Changes or Initiatives

Patrick Singer

- Increase community events and activities that encourage participation and community pride.
- Continue exploring innovative development ideas and partnerships.
- Improve transportation access and regional connectivity.

Neil Hicks

- Continue improving code enforcement and neighborhood quality standards.
- Support beautification and community appearance initiatives.

Orin Artsmith

- Expand public health and mental health resources.
- Improve tenant rights awareness and housing education.

Gavin Kelleher

- Increase visibility and engagement with students and younger residents.
- Expand educational outreach and communication efforts.

Steven Sayhun

- Improve Main Street aesthetics and bike/pedestrian infrastructure.
- Continue supporting downtown improvements.

Brian Schanen

- 25% of graduates stay in the community. Need to increase that number
- Increase base pay

6. Community Engagement & Outreach

Brian Schanen

- Increase direct outreach and communication with residents and students.
- Create stronger welcoming initiatives for new residents and students.

Gavin Kelleher

- Improve communication methods and modernize outreach efforts.
- Increase creativity in City communications and engagement.

Neil Hicks

- Encourage broader participation from community members who may not traditionally engage with local government.

Patrick Singer

- Continue strengthening neighborhood engagement and communication.
- Recognize and celebrate local businesses and community achievements.

Steven Sayhun

- Continue increasing University engagement and collaboration opportunities.

Orin Artsmith

- Increase Council visibility at community events and activities.
- Continue supporting local media and community communication channels.

Additional Strategic Themes Identified

- Expand and improve community communication platforms and accessibility.
- Continue long-term strategic planning discussions prior to annual budget development.
- Increase community engagement opportunities and visibility of Council and staff.
- Continue promoting Whitewater's natural assets, recreation opportunities, and community identity.
- Explore opportunities to improve gateway corridors and entrances into the community