



City Council Agenda Item

Meeting Date:	April 21, 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

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 food pantry and provided direction to staff to explore an alternative location within the building. Specifically, the Board recommended evaluating the relocation of the pantry to the first-floor existing “kitchen” space, which would eliminate the need for costly elevator repairs.

As part of this direction, the Board requested that staff obtain cost estimates for removing existing cabinets and fixtures and installing a separate electrical service to make the space functional for pantry operations. The Board also recommended exploring opportunities for donated labor and materials to help offset the costs associated with preparing the space.

Additionally, the Park Board recommended that the City develop a formal policy governing long-term use of City facilities. This policy would establish a consistent process for leasing City spaces, including rate structures, potential discounts, and criteria for free or reduced-cost use. While the Parks Department currently maintains policies for short-term use related to events and activities, no formal policy exists for long-term occupancy arrangements.

The Park Board will review additional information and provide further direction at its May meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

(If none, state N/A)

The financial impact of this proposal is currently undetermined. Costs associated with remodeling the existing “kitchen” space, including removal of cabinets and fixtures, as well as installation of a separate electrical service, have not yet been quantified. In addition, while there has been discussion regarding the potential for donated labor and materials, the availability and extent of such contributions remain unknown. Should donations not materialize, a funding source for these improvements has not been identified.

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 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 feasible. However, it is evident that continuous, full-time use contributes to overall building expenses and operational impacts, particularly with respect to the use and maintenance demands placed on building infrastructure such as the elevator.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Common Council provide direction on the proposed food pantry lease, including whether to proceed with continued evaluation of the alternative first-floor location or to bring the item forward for Council consideration at this time.

The Park Board has provided initial direction to explore an alternative first-floor location and will be reviewing additional information, including cost estimates and feasibility, at its May meeting. Staff can proceed based on Council's preference—either by continuing to evaluate the alternative location and returning with a formal recommendation following Park Board review, or by bringing the item forward for Council consideration.

Staff notes that the City currently charges rent or usage fees for similar long-term use of facilities. Consideration should be given to maintaining consistency and equity among organizations to avoid setting a precedent for no-cost use without clear policy justification.

Additionally, staff notes the importance of considering broader policy implications related to long-term use of City facilities, including consistency, fairness, and equity among organizations. Direction from Council on these considerations would help guide both this request and future requests of a similar nature.

ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED

(If none, state N/A)

Proposed Lease agreement
