



## Park Board Agenda Item

Meeting Date: July 16, 2025

Agenda Item: Discussion and possible action on disbanding the Urban Forestry Commission.

Staff Contact (name, email, phone): Kevin Boehm, [kboehm@whitewater-wi.gov](mailto:kboehm@whitewater-wi.gov), 262-473-0122

### BACKGROUND

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

The Urban Forestry Commission was established as a permanent subcommittee of the Parks and Recreation Board to oversee the city's urban forestry practices. It has played a vital role in guiding tree and shrub care, developing forestry management plans, promoting public education and engagement, and ensuring compliance with Tree City USA and Wisconsin Bird City designation requirements. Among its accomplishments, the commission was instrumental in the creation of the Starin Park Arboretum—one of Whitewater's most notable urban forestry achievements.

Staff has been advised to bring forward a proposal for the Park Board to consider the dissolution of the Urban Forestry Commission. While the commission has historically served an important purpose, many of its core duties—such as landscape plan review, public outreach, and program oversight—are already within the operational scope of city staff and the Parks and Recreation Board. Consolidating these responsibilities would reduce redundancy, improve coordination, and streamline operations. The City Forester would assume direct responsibility for reviewing urban forestry and landscaping plans and forwarding technical recommendations to the Planning and Architectural Review Committee (PARC). The Parks and Recreation Board would maintain oversight of remaining duties, including sustaining Tree City USA and Bird City designations, Arbor Day observances, and community engagement initiatives.

Though not the primary driver of this recommendation, the commission's ongoing difficulties in achieving quorum have at times delayed timely responses and decisions. Consolidation offers an opportunity to improve efficiency, eliminate procedural bottlenecks, and align with broader goals of simplifying city governance.

### PREVIOUS ACTIONS – COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(Dates, committees, action taken)

None

### FINANCIAL IMPACT

(If none, state N/A)

N/A

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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Staff recommends the Park Board discuss and consider taking formal action to support the dissolution of the Urban Forestry Commission, with a transition plan to incorporate its responsibilities under the purview of the Park Board. If approved, staff would coordinate with the City Attorney and City Council to prepare the necessary ordinance amendment.

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**ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED**

(If none, state N/A)

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