

To: City Council  
From: John Weidl  
Date: 11/7/2024  
Re: Starin Park Water Tower

Dear Council Members,

I want to thank you for approving the non-binding question and for your continued engagement as we move through this topic regarding the Starin Park Water Tower, which resulted in 2,209 votes (44%) to keep the tower and 2,836 votes (56%) in favor of not using taxpayer money for the restoration. First point I want to make is we don't have to do anything today.

The flexibility we have with this decision is due to the fact that the water tower is not quickly deteriorating, meaning there is no immediate need to act, and we are not required to make a final decision this year. In light of this, I recommend eventually referring the referendum results to the Landmarks Commission with a directive to develop a range of options that fall between full demolition and permanent restoration, including the possibility of repurposing the tower on-site. As a city designated landmark, within a city-owned park, kicking it to the committee with direct oversight over the object on the property is the most appropriate step. It will also build legitimacy towards whatever steps are taken afterward.

The key aspects of this approach are as follows:

1. **Options Development:** Request that the Landmarks Commission consider and propose alternative options for the water tower. These might include preservation strategies, partial demolition, or relocation efforts, such as lowering or showcasing parts of the tower in a museum.
2. **Funding Strategies:** Instruct the Commission to solicit and propose a fundraising and donations platform that could offset a significant portion of any restoration or preservation costs. Additionally, encourage them to explore how the \$600,000 currently allocated for demolition might be redirected to support any approved preservation or alternative solution. This would also be consistent with the city's expectations requiring fundraising efforts for the library renovations and the WAFC.
3. **Timeline:** Set a clear deadline of June 2025 for the Landmarks Commission to report back with their recommendations.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has clarified that now that the tower has been decommissioned, the budget originally set aside for its demolition can be redirected to non-demolition purposes. However, all future costs related to the water tower, beyond the funds allocated for demolition, must be borne by the general taxpayers or other contributions, not the utility.



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Between now and our next discussion, I would suggest Council members individually consider this approach and any additional guidance for city staff to facilitate the Commission's work.

Thank you, and I look forward to our continued discussion on the 19th.

Best, - JSW

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John S. Weidl". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John S. Weidl  
City Manager, City of Whitewater