



Office of the City Manager
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November 19, 2021

City of Whitewater Landmarks Commission
C/O Pat Blackmer
445 W. Center St.
Whitewater, WI 53190

Dear Pat,

This letter represents the City of Whitewater's formal response to the Landmarks Commission's letter I received on September 10, 2021 regarding the Effigy Mounds Preserve. Your September letter evoked the authority of the Landmarks Commission to notify the city manager or his or her designee of concerns related to the maintenance of the Effigy Mounds Preserve, a local landmark, and request a plan of action in response to concerns reported by the commission. This letter constitutes my response to that request. While there has been communication between the Landmarks Commission and the Parks & Recreation Department since September 10th regarding planned actions, I note that this formal letter is being presented to you 70 days after the original letter was received.

While financial limitations, state regulations, weather difficulties and public health emergencies have all contributed to the current condition of the Preserve, it remains a priceless asset worthy of the care and attention of the Whitewater community. To that end, the following outlines the plan of action for park maintenance moving forward.

Plan of Action as of November 10, 2021

- 1. *Brush Removal.*** Woody material will be carefully removed from the mounds located within the Effigy Mounds Preserve. Contracted prairie restoration professionals will work with municipal employees to remove woody material from the southern half of the preserve. Material will be cut, stacked and burned on site. Only hand work will be allowed for removal of woody material located on the mounds. Pre-approved herbicides will also be applied to stumps in order to completely destroy the brush plants. This work will be completed under frozen conditions and is planned for winter 2021-2022.
- 2. *Prescribed Burns.*** While much of the northern edge of the Preserve will not burn due to insufficient fuel, the southern half of the Preserve contains sufficient vegetation to conduct a successful prescribed burn of the area. Success of a prescribed burn is significantly influenced by weather conditions. Pending appropriate conditions, this work is expected to occur in spring 2022, but may be delayed until summer 2022.
- 3. *Trail Development.*** City employees will designate and then establish a new trail utilizing previous trail routes where appropriate, but adhering to current distance restrictions around the mounds. Work to establish the trail will begin in summer 2022 and will continue through the

growing season. Once the location of the trail is established, locations for signage placement can be identified.

4. **Tree Removal.** All trees other than Oak and Hickory will be removed from the Preserve. The tree removal program will begin in 2022 and may continue through 2024 in order to successfully remove all unwanted trees.
5. **Address Root Ball.** The root ball of a fallen tree will remain in place. Elissa Hult from the Common Heritage Group visited the site on October 13, 2021 and recommended that we leave the root ball intact and not try to return it into the ground. Ms. Hult believes returning the root ball may end up damaging the site further.
6. **Maintenance Schedule:** Once the above actions are taken, the preserve will be brought back in line with the current maintenance plan for the Preserve.

I am hopeful the above action items will meet the satisfaction of the Commission. However, if there are questions, please reach out through my Executive Assistant, Kathy Boyd. The City of Whitewater is fortunate to have a Landmarks Commission comprised of thoughtful and professional individuals with a genuine love of Whitewater's community treasures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Clapper', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cameron Clapper
City Manager

September 10, 2021

City of Whitewater Landmarks Commission
445 West Center Street
Whitewater, WI 53190

COPY

Cameron Clapper, City Administrator
Wallace McDonnell, City Attorney
Common Council Members
City of Whitewater
P.O. Box 178
312 West Whitewater Street
Whitewater, WI 53190

Dear Cameron,

Members of the City of Whitewater Landmarks Commission are pleased that the recently requested work involving tree removal to configure a new entry way has been accomplished at the Effigy Mounds Preserve, a Local Landmark owned by the City. Thank you.

However, four years have now passed and essential maintenance projects at the Preserve have not been addressed, despite numerous requests by the Landmarks Commission throughout this period. Therefore, this letter formally notifies you and the Common Council that the Landmarks Commission has serious concerns related to the maintenance of this particular Local Landmark. As a result, starting at the date of this letter, you will have sixty days to develop a plan of action to address the Commission's longstanding maintenance concerns at the Effigy Mounds Preserve, according to Municipal Code Chapter 17.08.040 (9):

*If the landmarks commission has concerns related to the maintenance of a landmark, it shall notify the city manager or his or her designee. The city manager or his or her designee shall have sixty days to develop a plan of action in response to the concerns reported by the commission. The plan of action shall be sent to the commission within the sixty-day time frame. **The plan of action for any city-owned landmark shall be publicly posted within the sixty-day timeframe.***

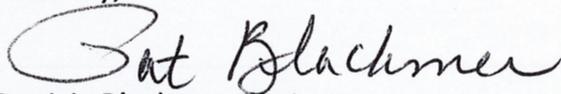
Here is the list of issues that we have been discussing with you and staff since 2017:

- 1) return tree root ball into its hole on Panther Mound; remove all fallen limbs and trees from all mounds and walking path;
- 2) remove invasive vegetation from mounds and from walking path, including raspberry canes, tree saplings, non-native invasive plants, being careful not to disturb the ground on any of the 13 mounds and within the state-statute mandated 15-foot buffer around each mound;

- 3) re-establish previously existing mown walking path, or create new walking path as previously determined with Parks & Recreation Director Eric Boettcher;
- 4) mount plaques on provided boulders; place boulders in key locations as previously determined with Parks & Recreation Director Eric Boettcher.

We understand the Covid-19 Pandemic has brought financial and staff difficulties to the City; however, these maintenance issues predate the Pandemic. Weather and ground conditions have hindered treatment of the tree root ball; however, all other work could have been accomplished during this time. It is our considered opinion that precious little has been done maintenance-wise for four years and that the Mounds Preserve's basic maintenance needs should no longer be put off and/or ignored. We expect it should be placed among the highest priorities of the City's list of projects to save and make accessible to the public this unique Local Landmark.

Sincerely,



Patricia Blackmer, Chair

For the City of Whitewater Landmarks Commission

Commission Members

Ben Adamitus

Ken Kienbaum

Dan Richardson

Kurt Speich

Olivia Pratt, City of Whitewater GIS Analyst

Lukas Schreiber, Common Council Representative