

**WORK SESSION AGENDA
WYOMING CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Monday, May 13, 2024, 5:30 P.M.

- 1) Call to Order**
- 2) Student Recognition**
- 3) Public Comment on Agenda Items (3 minute limit per person)**
- 4) Presentation by Evie Zois Sweeney from Muchmore, Harrington, Smalley & Associates (MHSA) – City’s lobbyist**
- 5) Tree Commission Discussion**
- 6) Greater Wyoming Community Resource Alliance Discussion**
- 7) Any Other Matters**
- 8) Acknowledgement of Visitors/Public Comment (3 minute limit per person)**

The City of Wyoming, including the City Council, is committed to ensuring all persons have access to all its programs, services, and activities, including any public meetings. The City Council will coordinate with city staff to ensure the City Council fulfills that commitment for its programs, services, and activities, including public meetings. Accommodations to enable virtual meeting attendance and participation can usually be made if a request is received at least 5 hours before the meeting time. Other accommodations may require more time.

Special Accommodations – Persons with impairments or disabilities needing accommodations to participate in the meeting or persons who need language interpretation services may contact the city clerk at either Clerk_info@wyomingmi.gov or 616.530.7296 at least 36 hours before the meeting to make arrangements for appropriate accommodation.

Acomodaciones Especiales – Personas que deseen asistir a esta reunión y necesitan acomodación para participar, como servicios de interpretación, deben comunicarse con la Oficina del Administrador de la Ciudad al 616.530.7296 o Clerk_info@wyomingmi.gov al menos 36 horas antes de la reunión para hacer arreglos para el alojamiento apropiado.

STAFF REPORT

Date: May 8, 2024
Subject: Wyoming Tree Commission
From: John Shay, City Manager
CC: Myron Erickson and Krashawn Martin
Meeting Date: May 13, 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council consider dissolving the Wyoming Tree Commission for reasons outlined in this Staff Report.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN:

- PILLAR 3 – STEWARDSHIP
 - GOAL 2 – Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of city operations and services.

DISCUSSION:

At the May work session, I would like to discuss the possibility of dissolving the Tree Commission and having the Public Works Department be responsible for tree-related issues in the City, except in City parks where the Parks Department would be responsible for tree-related issues.

I have included below a timeline of the history of the Tree Commission and justification for its dissolution below.

History of the Creation of the Wyoming Tree Commission

June 2016: Several residents approached the City Council to form a Tree Commission in the City of Wyoming. They called themselves the Tree Amigos.

Curtis Holt tasked Jennifer Stowell with helping create this board, keeping in mind that there was no funding available to the board. Funds would come from donations and grants. Jennifer met with a few of the future board members to go over the process of forming a board. At this meeting, they indicated their goal was to develop and promote programs that improve tree assets in the City's public and private properties.

July 26, 2016: The City Council approved the establishment of the Tree Commission.

September 20, 2016: Tree Commission's first meeting.

October 2016: The Tree Commission approved the bylaws and the fiduciary agreement with the GWCRA.

March 2017: City is designated as a Tree City USA community. Requirements to become and retain the Tree City USA status include:

1. Formation of a tree board, which can be a professional forester, arborist, city department, citizen-led tree board or some combination of these.
2. Tree care ordinance
3. Spend at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry (we meet this when adding all departments' tree-care costs together: Parks, Public Works, Spongy Moth spraying, etc.)
4. Host an Arbor Day event.

In the beginning, all funds came from donations and grants. The donations have dropped significantly. Jennifer feels this is due to lack of board members and members not having fundraising experience. A board member's spouse passed away in July 2017, and he donated \$10,000 in her name to create a community orchard at West Elementary, which is still being maintained by the school and Tree Commission.

Other projects have included tree plantings at Hom Flats, neighborhood plantings, and most recently thanks to a DNR grant, planting of 20+ trees in 2023. Another planting is coming up in 2024 at Godfrey Lee School.

2023: City Manager Holt approved \$10,000 from the General Fund be given to the Tree Commission for use of grant matching funds only.

Justification for dissolving the Wyoming Tree Commission

The Tree Commission meets monthly and has a seven-member board. It continues to have problems filling all seven seats and struggles with raising funds. The FY 2024 budget reflects only \$2,000 in annual revenues from donations. To date, no donations have been received. The FY 2024 budget reflects \$11,725 in expenses mostly for tree planting. To date, it has not spent any funds. Its fund balance as of April 30, 2024 is \$15,231.18, of which \$10,000 is the funds restricted for grant matching use.

City staff used to attend the commission's monthly meetings where in many cases there is no quorum to hold the meeting. Jennifer Stowell prepares the annual budget and presents the monthly financial reports to the commission. The Finance Department includes the Tree Commission in the monthly financial reports presented to the Greater Wyoming Community Resource Alliance (Alliance) board due to the fiduciary agreement between the Alliance and the Tree Commission. The Alliance also has a fiduciary services agreement in place with the City. To make accounting for the Tree Commission more efficient, in the fiscal year 2025 budget, the Tree Commission has been included in the City's budget rather than the Alliance budget.

In an effort to improve the efficiency of City operations, I would like to discuss dissolving the Tree Commission and having the Public Works Department and Parks Department oversee the City's planting, maintenance and removal of trees on City property. The City's intent would be to retain its Tree City USA designation since the Arbor Day Foundation's standards include maintaining a tree board or department, which can be delegated to a professional forester, arborist, city department, citizen-led tree board or

some combination. This would free up staff resources and eliminate the challenge of finding individuals willing to serve on the Tree Commission. Individuals could still donate money to the City or to the Greater Wyoming Community Resource Alliance for purposes of planting trees on City property or right-of-way.

BUDGET IMPACT:

There will be no impact to the overall City budget. The tree-related expenditures currently reflected under the Tree Commission in the General Fund for FY 2025 would be transferred to the Parks Department or Public Works Department based on the location of the work. In future years, both departments will budget appropriately for the necessary tree-related work.

STAFF REPORT

Date: May 8, 2024
Subject: Greater Wyoming Community Resource Alliance
From: John Shay, City Manager
CC: Kim Koster and Krashawn Martin
Meeting Date: May 13, 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council consider repurposing the Greater Wyoming Community Resource Alliance for reasons outlined in this Staff Report.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN:

- PILLAR 3 – STEWARDSHIP
 - GOAL 2 – Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of city operations and services.

DISCUSSION:

At the May work session, I would like to update the Council on recent discussions by the Greater Wyoming Community Resource Alliance (GWCRA) board members on the purpose of the GWCRA.

First Purpose: Many years ago, the City had a parks project that was to be funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, but the foundation did not award grants to municipalities. The Grand Rapids Community Foundation did not want to be a pass-thru organization, so the GWCRA was formed to accept grant money for City of Wyoming projects. This function is currently used to receive foundation grants and other gifts to support public safety.

Second Purpose: The City also wanted to create a mechanism to enable the Parks & Recreation Department to maintain programs. While the City could reduce fees, this would reduce revenues that, in turn, could reduce programs. Thus, the GWCRA could provide funding to the City to provide scholarships to economically disadvantaged residents to participate in Parks & Recreation programs.

Third Purpose: There was a desire for the City to provide financial oversight for City-affiliated boards and commissions that were soliciting funding but over which the City had no control (Tree Commission, Pinery Park Little League, etc.). A 501(c)(3) organization was needed to do this. Thus, the GWCRA could also be the fiduciary for these groups to avoid someone running off with money if individuals ran these programs. In practice, the City's Finance Department provides the accounting services for the GWCRA.

At some point, the GWCRA transitioned to providing grants to other organizations since it was raising more money than it was spending. There was very little guidance on what criteria the GWCRA used to determine if the board should approve requests for grant funding, so it used an informal process to award grants to groups that benefited the Wyoming community.

Recently, the GWCRA board members began discussing the future of the organization, especially as to why the GWCRA would continue to raise funds in competition with other organizations and foundations. The discussion centered on returning to the GWCRA's original purpose, which is to provide tax deductions for donations and to use donations from the Spring Carnival to help pay for economically disadvantaged children to attend Parks & Recreation programs. Lastly, if there are funds available, then perhaps the GWCRA could fund emergency grant requests or those grant requests recommended by the Wyoming Community Foundation but which the Foundation is unable to fund itself.

The FY 2024 budget reflects \$11,900 in annual revenues, of which \$10,000 is from donations. Most of the donations come from the Spring Carnival in which the vendor donates 20% of its ticket sales (half to the City's Parks Department and half to the GWCRA). If the Spring Carnival went away or a new vendor took over, it is likely this major revenue source would be eliminated. To date, only \$1,000 in donations and \$2,075 in interest income have been received. The FY 2024 budget reflects \$33,500 in expenses mostly for Parks & Recreation scholarships and to provide grants to other organizations. Its fund balance as of March 31, 2024 is \$71,868.04.

The GWCRA board meets monthly. In addition, a total of five City staff attends each of these meetings. The Finance Department also prepares the annual budget, presents the monthly financial reports and completes all required annual filings. The City has been paying for the annual filings at a cost of \$1,500 per year. This cost has been moved to the GWCRA budget for FY 2025.

I would like to discuss the "repurposing" of the GWCRA with the Council at the May work session.