



Waukesha County

Office of the County Executive

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LEGISLATION WOULD SAVE WAUKESHA COUNTY TAXPAYERS MILLIONS, ALLOW UNSAFE BUILDING TO BE DEMOLISHED

(Waukesha) - Republican lawmakers Senator Chris Kapenga and Representative Adam Neylon have introduced a bill that could save Waukesha County taxpayers millions of dollars. The bill restricts some municipalities from enforcing local historic regulations on Waukesha County-owned properties. If the bill is signed into law, Waukesha County will no longer be required to maintain the vacant former Health and Human Services (HHS) building, and may demolish the structure, which will likely incur millions of dollars in additional costs if no action is taken.

“Just seven unelected members of the City of Waukesha’s Landmark Commission are holding hundreds of thousands of county taxpayers hostage,” said County Executive Paul Farrow. “Spending a million dollars or more to maintain a vacant building is not only a waste of tax dollars it could force the county to forgo important infrastructure projects or delay maintenance on buildings or roads that thousands of residents use every day.”

The unelected City of Waukesha Landmark Commission designated the property as an historical landmark in 2001, without the support of Waukesha County, obligating taxpayers to fund all maintenance and repairs. In 2013, a new HHS building was funded and built, leaving the old building vacant.

A recent assessment has determined that the unoccupied building needs a new roof, at an estimated cost of over \$1 million. Deterioration of the current roof could cause the entire building to become contaminated with asbestos, rendering all building assets unrecoverable; all remaining equipment and materials unsaleable; eliminating the ability to recycle any materials; and quadrupling current demolition cost estimates.

A 2013 Building Assessment Report concluded renovation of the building would cost \$24 million; the property was valued at \$1.3 million. Waukesha County has undertaken two separate processes to find a buyer willing to preserve the building, but received no viable offers. The City of Waukesha Landmark Commission has since denied County requests to rescind the landmark designation and to proceed with demolition efforts. The bill is available to review at www.waukeshacounty.gov.

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