

Parking lot deal on hold pending DNR test review

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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A proposed parking lot swap between the City of Port Washington and developer Daniel Ewig is on hold — at least temporarily — while an environmental report on one of the lots is sent to the Department of Natural Resources for review.

The Common Council on Tuesday agreed to ask Ewig for a 60-day extension to complete the land swap so the DNR can review the report by Konicek Environmental Consulting.

The swap of Ewig's property — the former M&I Bank drive-through and parking area between Washington and Pier streets west of Franklin Street — for the city-owned parking lot across Washington Street was to have been completed by Feb. 1.

Konicek Environmental did five soil borings on Ewig's property, which years ago was home to an auto repair facility.

"It appears the levels of chemical compounds in the soils are under the limits" set by the DNR, City Administrator Mark Grams said. "But we don't know that for sure."

By having the DNR review the report, the city hopes to learn what if any remediation is necessary, how long it will take, the potential cost and funding sources, City Attorney Eric Eberhardt said.

After receiving the DNR's report, which is expected to take three to four weeks, the city will have 15 days to decide if it wants to proceed with the land swap, he added.

Eberhardt said he spoke to Ewig's attorney about the situation, and he indicated the extension would be approved.

Ald. Mike Ehrlich, an architect working for Ewig on the project, abstained from the vote.

The proposed land swap would provide Ewig with a parking lot next to the Boerner Mercantile Building, which he is renovating, while providing the city with a slightly larger parking lot that could be used by downtown workers as well as tourists.

No money will change hands as part of the swap, but both properties will be upgraded to create more attractive and user-friendly parking, officials said.

The city will be responsible for removing the former bank building, but officials said the structure has salvage value that will help offset the cost.

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