

Cleanup work refuels gas station project

Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
Wednesday, 08 December 2010 19:18

Removal of contaminated soils, concrete expected to pave way for construction of long-delayed 'green' business

Heavy equipment that removed contaminated soils and concrete from the former Clark gas station on Grand Avenue in Port Washington last week marked the end of environmental issues on the property, owner Rick Fulop said.

Once he receives a letter from the State of Wisconsin confirming a clean site, Fulop said, work on a long-awaited "green" gas station and convenience store can commence.

"We still have every intention of moving forward. That hasn't changed," he said. "It's been a very long and arduous process. But once I get the letter from the State of Wisconsin, then I can proceed. The environmental work has taken all my time. The focus has been getting that approval.

"I always knew it was coming. It was just a matter of time."

The work done last week will also settle city concerns about the appearance of the site, Fulop said.

"It was a little disheveled," he said.

Fulop said he will sit down with architect Mike Ehrlich of Haag Müller to revise his plan slightly, making the proposed store about 600 square feet larger than originally planned.

The basic plan won't change, he emphasized, adding that he's unsure whether the proposed changes would require additional city approval.

However, because of the amount of time that has passed since he took out a building permit, Fulop said he may need to reapply for the permit.

He has financing in place for the project, Fulop said.

"I already have hundreds of hours invested in this project," he said. "I don't foresee any problems."

When asked when construction was expected to begin, he answered, "Thirteen months ago. I am down much longer than I anticipated.

"I was scheduled to be down for nine months."

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It's been more than two years since he closed the door of the gas station on Oct. 31, 2008.

The delay, he said, was due to a number of things, including bureaucratic delays and the economic environment.

He remains excited about the plan, Fulop said.

"The state is very much in favor of the project, too," he said. "I wish I was open already."

If all goes according to plan, Fulop said, the new station will open sometime next year. To do that, he added, he will have to break ground on the new station no later than May.

"The plan is to do that," he said.

The project continues to pique the curiosity of his former customers, Fulop said.

"There's not a place I go in the city where people aren't saying to me that they can't wait for us to reopen," Fulop said. "That's encouraging. The support that's out there two years later just reinforces our determination to get this done."