

202 N. James St.
Waukesha, WI 53186

Common Council
City of Waukesha

I think it is important for the aldermen to have as much background information as possible about the Bartles-Maguire/Wadhams Gas Station at 422 E. Broadway.



Bartles-Maguire/Wadhams Gas Station 1950's, 422 E. Broadway, Waukesha, WI

The building at 422 E. Broadway, which is a “house” or “cottage” style gas station was surveyed in 2006 by the DOT as part of the Broadway resurfacing project and deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. According to the state, the City of Waukesha should have gotten the information in 2006 because they were a partner in the road project. Somehow that information did not get passed on to the proper individuals at the city. I noticed it in January, 2010, when I was updating an historic property list. I brought it to Dave Kopp’s attention and he had started to work on it before he left. Upon his departure, I brought it to Steve Esser’s attention first, then to Doug Koehler and Steve Crandell’s attention. In July, the Landmarks Commission voted to make the Bartles-Maguire/Wadhams gas station a Local Landmark.

The “house” style gas stations were built in the 1920’s and were designed to blend into residential neighborhoods. The nomination papers for the National Register, which I am including in this packet, list three other “house” style gas stations in Waukesha County. Two of these have been demolished and the third has an inappropriate addition on it. Therefore, this is believed to be the last intact “house” style gas station in Waukesha County. Jim Draeger at the State Historical Society did a documentary on old gas stations. It can be viewed at <http://www.wisconsinstories.org/fillerup/>. This is a very informative documentary and made me realize what a unique and special building this is.

In the last few months, I have done more extensive research on this building and gas stations. The building at 422 E. Broadway was built in 1929 and was known as Wally’s Service Station from the 1940’s until 1967. Then, it was a fruit stand until 1997. The most recent tenants were used car dealers. The 1939 service bay was designed to match the 1929 “house” portion of the structure and according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties, should be retained and restored. Because there were two identical gas stations built by the Bartles-Maguire

company in Waukesha, this is believed to be their signature style station in this area. The other one is demolished and I have not found any others of this style that still exist. I have also searched for “house” style gas stations in the database from the intensive surveys of historical buildings done by the Wisconsin Historical Society in the 1970’s (also known as the AHI). There were very few of the “house” style gas stations still existing in the 1970’s and of those listed in the AHI, more than half of them are gone.



Wally's Service Station (Bartles-Maguire/Wadhams), picture provided by Wally Dibben's family

As head of the group that is trying to save the Bartles-Maguire gas station, I want to let you know that our numbers are growing. There are at least 60 individuals who have requested updates on the efforts to save the gas station. I have over 25 years of experience in historic preservation and this “house” style gas station has generated more interest than any of the other properties that I have participated in the efforts to save. We currently have 435 signatures on the petition. I have given copies of the petition to the YMCA board, but I have retained the originals because we are continuing to get signatures. I was contacted in December by a graduate student in Chicago about the gas station. She and some of her classmates in the graduate program for historic preservation have been following the efforts to save the building. She had to write a paper on adaptive reuse of an historic structure for a final in one of her courses and asked if I could provide her with more details on the gas station. Her adaptive reuse plan utilized the gas station as a coffee shop that was run by the residents of the new apartment building.

Over the last few months I have had requests from several groups to talk about the gas station at their meetings. At these meetings, I have had people ask whether or not the YMCA will sell or lease the building. I also have had numerous people ask if any fundraising is going on to pay for repairs or maintenance to the building. We have written two letters, one in October and one recently, to the YMCA board offering our assistance. In the most recent letter, I have offered to help spearhead fundraising efforts for repairs to the building.

I want to point out that many communities have landmarked, preserved, and found new uses for historic gas stations. In the comments on the petition to save the gas station, Brian McCormick, retired preservation architect from the state of Wisconsin says, “These historic “cottage style” gas stations are rare and important. They have great reuse potential: as small neighborhood shops for coffee, ice cream etc.”

One good example of adaptive reuse of a gas station is the Sherman Perk in Milwaukee. This Streamline Moderne gas station has found a new life as a coffee shop and neighborhood gathering spot in the Sherman Park neighborhood.



Former Copeland Service Station, Sherman Park, Milwaukee, WI

Another example from Wisconsin is the former Pure Oil Gas Station in Monroe. This “house” style station is now a water softener sales office. I have seen examples of historic gas stations in many states being used as ice cream stands, coffee shops, brew houses, etc...



Former Pure Oil Gas Station, Monroe, WI

There are also gas station aficionados who travel around and visit historic gas stations and collect gas station memorabilia. I want to direct you to the Chicago Tribune article "Full Service" on December 2, 2001. This article featured some of Wisconsin's restored gas stations and touted them as great destinations for day trips. I have also had the opportunity to talk to some of the members of the Society for Commercial Archaeology about the Bartles-Maguire gas station. This is a national group devoted to saving early roadside architecture like gas stations and the structures that one would see along Route 66. Many of the members travel extensively to these roadside sites. The Bartles-Maguire gas station has been nominated to their endangered list for 2011. In West Allis, there is a former Wadhams pagoda style gas station that has been restored as a museum.



Wadhams Gas Station, West Allis, WI

This property falls within a redevelopment district. The redevelopment district papers state: "Historic buildings will be integrated in new development that occurs around them. When necessary historic buildings should be renovated and restored." Besides its historical significance, this is a very attractive building along the best-looking gateway into the downtown. The "alternate site plan" for the apartment project that was submitted to Plan Commission in December shows that this building can easily be integrated into the new development that is being proposed and would be quite attractive. Even if the apartment plans do not go forward this building could be integrated into green space or sold/leased to an individual who would restore and utilize the building. I found an example of a Streamline Moderne gas station in California that has been incorporated into a small neighborhood park very similar to what could be done with the green space on this corner.



Adams Square Mini-Park Glendale, California

The Administrative Review Appeals Board upheld the Local Landmark designation. I am attaching their decision. The decision is well written and goes over all of the testimony. Please take the time to read through their decision. I want to direct you to number 6 on page 7 of their decision. It says that this is considered a rare type of building that contributes to the community. They also state that they would like Landmarks to consider allowing this building to be moved if this comes back to them. In addition, if it is moved the new owner should register the building on the National and State Register. The moving of a historical structure often results in the loss of its National Register designation. With this structure in particular, the site, its orientation on the site, and how the building relates to the site are part of what makes it eligible for the National Register. For example, "House" style gas stations were situated on an angle to the street corner so that the front façade was visible to traffic on both streets.

Landmarks Commission in November voted to adopt the criteria set forth by the National Register regulations for moving historic properties and retaining their designation on the National Register. The first statement says, "Properties listed in the National Register should be moved only when there is no feasible alternative for preservation. When a property is moved, every effort should be made to reestablish its historic orientation, immediate setting, and general environment." As interpreted by Jim Draeger, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, this means that the gas station would need to be moved to a northwest corner, in a residential neighborhood, with similar setbacks in order to retain its eligibility for the National Register. It also cannot be considered an intrusion into another historic district.

One other reason to consider the retention of the National Register designation for this property is that under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation act, the funds from WHEDA/HUD that Common Bond is considering using would be jeopardized by the destruction of a historic property. In addition, under section 106 any adverse effect on an historic property is considered when looking at actions undertaken by a federal agency and it specifically states that an adverse effect could be removal of the property from its historic location. This project has been flagged at WHEDA and HUD.

I had a retired house mover look at the structure. Because of the brick on concrete slab construction, the bottom courses of brick would need to be removed in order to get the supporting beams underneath. The roof structures and the chimney would also need to be removed because of the overhead wires and the trees. He said the cost would be prohibitive. He estimated that the cost would be close to \$100,000 to move the structure. In addition, I have had the

opportunity to talk with many of the individuals interested in saving the gas station and they want the gas station preserved on its present site.

As evidenced by the “alternate” site plan for the apartments that was submitted to Plan Commission in December, the preservation of this building does not mean that the YMCA cannot develop its site. Four out of the five Commissioners present at Plan Commission in December stated that they wanted the gas station to remain on site and be incorporated into the new development. If Common Bond goes forward with its plans for the apartments, it could choose to restore and utilize the gas station possibly taking advantage of the historic rehabilitation tax credits and TIF funds. It could be attached to the apartments with a breezeway and would make a great meeting area for the residents of the new building.

I have reviewed the quote that the YMCA got from VJS construction for the repairs to the gas station and I believe that it can be done for far less than that. There is \$1680 to remove the vines and clean up the debris outside. I have offered to remove the vines for free. I also have offered to get a group together to clean up the debris inside and outside. In addition, there is \$42,000 to tuck-point the building. With historic buildings only the areas that are deteriorated should be replaced and I did not see very many areas that needed tuck-pointing. A new cedar shake roof was specified for \$9500. I have done extensive research on this building and according to the assessor’s reports from the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s, it never had a cedar shake roof, it always had asphalt shingles. In addition, the state approves three tab shingles for its historic tax credit projects. Another option is to leave the green metal roof on the building, Landmarks Commission does not require properties to be taken back to their original appearance when they are designated a landmark. I had a contractor draw up an estimate for exterior work only and the quote was less than half of the cost that VJS quoted for the exterior work.

There are many options available to the YMCA. It could sell or lease the gas station and an individual that is interested in restoring the structure could utilize the tax credits for rehabilitation of historic structures and possibly TIF funds. Some of the potential uses for the gas station are coffee shop, art gallery, office space, hair salon, tourist information building, or bakery. There are some paint and repair grants available through Landmarks Commission that the YMCA/Common Bond or another individual could utilize. There may be other grants available. As stated before, there is interest in fundraising and also interest in helping with the cleanup and restoration. We have written two letters, one in October and one recently, to the YMCA board offering our assistance free of charge. In our group we have many knowledgeable and experienced people, including one individual who works as a paid consultant on historic tax credit projects. There is the interest and the desire in the community to see this rare “house” style gas station remain on its present site and be restored.

I welcome your feedback and am happy to answer any questions. I can be reached at 262-547-8364 or by e-mail at emerymary@sbcglobal.net.

Sincerely,

Mary R. Emery

