



Historic Water Tower Neighborhood

January 25, 2021

Milwaukee County Supervisor Sheldon Wasserman
Milwaukee County Parks Director Guy Smith
Milwaukee County Board Committee on Parks, Energy and Environment
Milwaukee County Lakefront Development Advisory Council
Milwaukee Alderman Nik Kovac
Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services Commissioner Erica R. Roberts
State of Wisconsin Historic Preservation Office

Dear City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County & State of Wisconsin Officials,

The Historic Water Tower Neighborhood (HWTN) Buildings and Institutions Committee is writing to oppose any changes to or new uses of the publicly owned Bradford Beach Bathhouse building by The Dock LLC or Milwaukee County until public concerns are fully addressed by Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee.

Members of HWTN, a group formed in 1974 to protect the residential character of our historic neighborhood, objected last year at the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to plans by The Dock to install three shipping containers on the upper floor of the open-air building for a bar and private restaurant. HPC approved with modifications installation of one container to be used as a bar. HPC did not approve the plan for two additional containers for a restaurant.

The Dock is now moving forward to seek needed city and county approvals for the bar. Representatives of The Dock suggested they may revise and resubmit plans for the restaurant to HPC but have not yet done so.

The historic and beloved bathhouse, built in 1949 in the Moderne-style, is owned by Milwaukee County. HPC continues to have jurisdiction over changes to the historic building, which is also a designated Milwaukee County Landmark. City of Milwaukee ordinances govern the operation of bars and restaurants. Therefore, HWTN asks that the county and city not approve any plans for additional usage or changes to the bathhouse by The Dock or Milwaukee County until the following concerns that have been raised by area residents are fully addressed and meaningful input is received into them:

- **Public Access.** Will Milwaukee County guarantee full public access to all portions of the bathhouse and footbridge and prevent any exclusive use of any part of the building, whether as a “rentable lakeside space for private events” as The Dock proposed in a news release or usage limited to only their paying bar or restaurant patrons (the lease with The Dock says “the Premises shall remain open and available to the public during regular hours the Park remains open”)?
- **Potential Physical Damage.** Is the historic bathhouse’s upper floor structurally sound enough to hold from one to three shipping containers, weighing approximately 2.6 tons apiece when empty?
- **Historic Preservation.** Will installation of any shipping containers harm the historic appearance and nature of the bathhouse, which was designed to look like a ship, with the upper story opening onto a ship-like promenade deck?
- **Emphasis on Alcohol, Paying Customers.** Will the addition of yet another bar and possibly a sit-down restaurant make Bradford Beach less of a public park and open space for all residents of any means and for families, and more of an exclusive destination venue for paying customers with an emphasis on selling and consuming alcohol?
- **Noise.** Will the proposed changes result in additional noise, such as amplified music, that will negatively affect the nearby residential neighborhood or the natural park atmosphere of Bradford Beach?
- **Public Trust Doctrine.** Do any current or proposed use of or changes to the bathhouse violate Wisconsin’s Public Trust Doctrine?

- State of Wisconsin Review. When will the State Historic Preservation Office be contacted for required plan review?
- ADA Approval. Has HPC received and approved an ADA plan as it required?
- Racial Equity. How does this proposal address the Milwaukee County commitment to advancing racial equity and eliminating health disparities given the financial barriers to using the facility being proposed?
- Lack of Public Process. Why hasn't Milwaukee County proactively conducted a public presentation, meeting and chance for input by neighbors, HWTN and the general public (besides the upcoming Lakefront Development Advisory Commission meeting, which comes very late in the process) given that Milwaukee County may give or withhold approval for improvements under the lease with The Dock?

Our committee believes residents must be given the opportunity for input into the proposal and have concerns addressed before the county and city approve any new installations, construction or usage of the Bradford Beach Bathhouse.



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cc: Toby Reynolds, 2021 HWTN President
Jeff Bentoff, HWTN VP Communications, Buildings and Institutions Committee Member
Sandra McSweeney, HWTN Buildings and Institutions Committee Member