

Kenosha County leaders oppose Dark Stores loopholes

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KENOSHA – For the last 10 years, growing numbers of commercial properties have been using property tax avoidance strategies known as Dark Store loopholes to push their fair share of paying for the cost of critical local services onto homeowners and small businesses.

Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian and County Executive Jim Kreuser are joined by eight towns and villages of Kenosha County in calling for the governor to support legislation closing the Dark Store loopholes as a part of the next state budget. The group of community leaders sent a letter with the request to both Gov. Scott Walker and Democratic candidate for governor Tony Evers – currently State Superintendent of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

The letter to Evers and Walker explained the necessity of eliminating the loophole to avoid having even more of the property tax burden shifted from commercial properties to homeowners and small businesses.

The letter states in part: “We know you both can agree that homeowners should not and cannot bear more of the tax burden than they already do, which is nearly 70 percent of the total state levy.”

Kenosha County voters also will have a chance to weigh in on the measure, with referendum questions related to Dark Stores loopholes on the Nov. 6 ballot. Supporters of the referendum believe closed, vacant (dark) properties should not be considered as comparable properties for determining the assessed value of open, occupied and fully operational properties; and seek to overturn the 2008 Wisconsin Supreme Court decision in Walgreens v. City of Madison, which is being interpreted by the courts as requiring municipalities to assess many leased commercial properties at a substantial discount, often 50 percent below the actual sale prices of such properties.