

Ban urged on watering lawns, washing cars



Waukesha officials await proposed water conservation law

By KOLLIN KOSMICKI
Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA - As officials here prepare to ponder a long-term plan to curtail water consumption, Alderman Emanuele Vitale said Monday the city should ban citizens from watering lawns and washing automobiles on their properties.

Vitale called those actions a "frivolous" use of the resource, especially for a city facing problems with depletion and relatively high radium concentrations.

"People are so worried about their lawns that it's a shame. I've seen people sprinkling their lawns with an approaching

storm. They know it's going to rain so why are they watering?" Vitale said. "Certainly the city should try to ban some of these frivolous usages."

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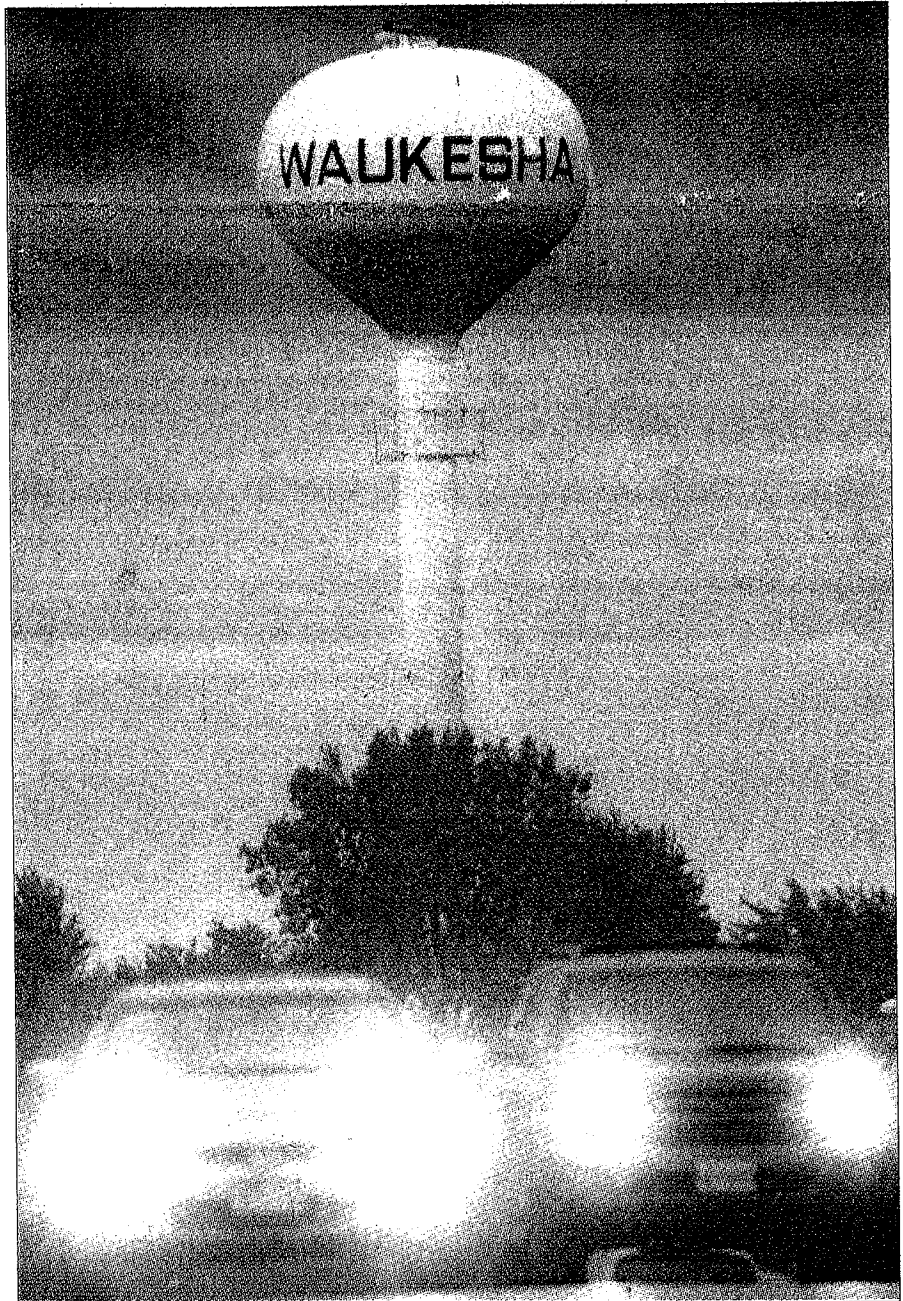
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Alderman Emanuele Vitale suggests the city can do more to conserve water. Some of his ideas include stopping people from washing cars and watering lawns.



Kevin Harnack/Freeman Staff

Traffic on Meadowbrook Road travels northbound away from a Waukesha Water Utility water tower on Monday. A proposal by Alderman Emanuele Vitale suggests that city water should not be used to wash cars or water lawns to help keep the city's water usage down.

Water

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While Vitale supports a ban on those activities, he also scoffed at citizens who use a hose to clean their driveways. But he said he would stop short of forbidding use of sprinklers to water gardens.

"This is a supreme issue as far as I'm concerned, and a lot of people, they take their fresh water for granted," he said.

Vitale's comments came as the Waukesha Water Utility plans to soon present ideas for an expansive water conservation ordinance. It is expected to anchor a planned goal to cut use by 20 percent over the next 15 years through a series of restrictions and incentive-based programs.

Dan Duchniak, general manager of the utility, said Vitale's relatively bold ideas are something offi-

cially would need to examine further.

Duchniak has not come across any other communities that completely ban lawn watering and vehicle washing, he said.

"They're interesting concepts, and I think we need to investigate all the options that are available," Duchniak said.

For several months utility officials have researched ideas for the soon-to-be introduced ordinance. Duchniak mentioned other possible ideas for the proposal. They include the following:

- Banning sprinkler use on certain days of the week
- Eliminating a program that allows residents to be credited for water that doesn't drain into the sewer system
- Requiring developers to build in a way that allows for recharge of aquifers

The city in the past has enacted temporary advisories urging people against sprinkler use - espe-

cially during drought conditions - but doesn't have a law to prohibit the activities.

Banning outright vehicle washing or lawn watering would be difficult to enforce, Vitale acknowledged.

"Let's face it: If the car's behind the house nobody's going to see you washing your car," Vitale said.

Plus, Waukesha can ill afford more police officers to enforce the law, he said. Vitale suggested that patrolling officers could start by issuing warnings.

Alderman Jeff Fowle, who referred the conservation proposal to the city's ordinance and license committee, said Vitale's ideas may be "jumping the gun." But Fowle does favor taking a "serious look" at a conservation plan.

"We can't do business like we've done in the past," he said.

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