

Water Utility seeks ordinances ensuring efficient irrigation systems

By Lauren Anderson

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WAUKESHA — The Waukesha Water Utility is seeking to initiate an ordinance requiring the installation of water-efficient sprinkler systems.

An effort to encourage more water conservation, the ordinance would require all landscape irrigation systems in the city to be installed and operated in a manner that prevents the waste of water and promotes efficient water usage.

The Waukesha Water Commission will consider the ordinance when it meets at 6 p.m. Thursday in the Water Utility Conference Room, 115 Delafield St.

If approved, it would be one of the first such ordinances in the state, utility officials said. The proposed ordinance draws inspiration from ones already established in Dallas, Texas and Denver, Colorado.

Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak said it's intended to encourage responsible stewardship of the city's water resources.

The city implemented a sprinkler ordinance nine years ago which limits residents' watering during daytime hours, when water is often lost to evaporation. The proposed irrigation ordinance is seen as a continuation of those conservation efforts.

The proposed ordinance mandates the use of a WaterSense labeled controller, which utility officials said can save a home as much as 50 percent on summer water bills and reduces landscape runoff by as much as 71 percent. Costs for the sensors range from about \$200 to more than \$1,000.

Less expensive controllers serve as a timer with a rain and snow sensor, while the more expensive ones feature built-in receptors that interpret weather data and water a landscape accordingly.

If OK'd by the water commission, the ordinance would move to the city's Ordinance and Licensing Committee.

Proposed annexation

The Water Commission will also consider the proposed annexation of property south of the city, which could be used for the development of shallow wells.

Those wells would be needed as a "plan B" if the city's Great Lakes water diversion option is unsuccessful, Duchniak said. The city purchased the former Lathers parcel, located in the Town of Waukesha, in 2012.

Duchniak said developing shallow wells would not be as environmentally sustainable as the Great Lakes option. To be successful, the city's water application would need approval from all eight regional governors.

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