

WAUKESHA WATER PROPOSAL

Republicans blast letter opposing water plan

GOP legislators say Democratic writer favors ‘band-aid system’ already rejected by regulators

By Matt Masterson

Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — More than a half-dozen Republican Wisconsin legislators have penned a memo urging constituents not to sign a letter circulating through the Council of State Governments opposing Waukesha’s **Great Lakes** diversion application.

Five state representatives and two state senators issued the statement Tuesday, which asks residents not to sign the letter they say state Rep. Cory Mason has begun circulating through the council.

The letter claims Mason — a Racine Democrat who has been outspoken against the city’s water proposal — is asking Waukesha to implement a “band-aid system” for its drinking water they claim has already been rejected by state regulators.

“It is doubtful that legislators understand the complexity of the water issues Waukesha faces,” Tuesday’s statement reads.

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Water

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The release was signed by state Reps. Scott Allen, R-Waukesha; Adam Neylon, R-Pewaukee; Cindi Duchow, R-Town of Delafield; Mike Kuglitsch, R-New Berlin; and Jessie Rodriguez, R-Franklin; along with state Sens. Mary Lazich, R-New Berlin and Leah Vukmir, R-Brookfield.

During a public hearing held last month by the **Great Lakes** Compact Council and Regional Body, Mason said he believed the Department of Natural Resources came to an incorrect conclusion in its review of Waukesha’s application, which he called an “urban sprawl plan masquerading as a drinking water problem.”

He claimed the city should be able to better treat its radium-contaminated water through its wells and raised concerns about the city’s expanded service region as well as the water’s return route to Lake Michigan.

A staff member at Mason's office told The Freeman Tuesday the letter opposing the application was not circulated by Mason, but rather the **Great Lakes** Legislative Caucus — a nonpartisan group of lawmakers from eight states and two Canadian provinces which border the **Great Lakes**, according to its website.

Waukesha is looking to divert up to an annual average of 10.1 million gallons of Lake Michigan water per day for its water supply service area through a straddling county exception under the Great Lake Compact. The water would be obtained from the Oak Creek Water Utility and treated wastewater would be discharged back into the Root River.

In their statement, the Republican legislators said Waukesha has already been forced to suspend use of two of its shallow aquifer wells, which had chloride levels more than three times those found in Flint, Michigan.

They also say it was Mason's own planning law that led to the city's expanded service area — which features portions of four other nearby municipalities — rather than a desire for growth.

"The reality is that the service area delineated by the Southeastern Regional Planning Commission ... is largely developed," the statement reads. "Population growth is projected to be 0.5 percent per year until build-out in 2050. Only 15 percent of the area is available for development."

The application remains under review by the Compact Council and Regional Body and the period to submit public comments expires March 14. Comments may be submitted at www.waukeshadiversion.org/ comments/ or emailed to comments@waukeshadiversion.org.

The council is expected to issue a ruling on the application sometime this spring following further meetings in Chicago.

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Next step

- The **Great Lakes** Compact Council and Regional Body will hold a face-to-face meeting to discuss a declaration of finding in Chicago on April 21, followed by a decision on Waukesha's proposal to divert **Great Lakes** water made no sooner than 30 days after that date.
- Public comments may be submitted until March 14 at www.waukeshadiversion.org/comments/ or emailed to comments@waukeshadiversion.org.