



Waukesha Water Utility

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Waukesha to explain water supply options to public

Waukesha Mayor Larry Nelson has announced a public meeting to explain the city's exploration of its future water supply options. The meeting will be held February 12, 2007 at 7 p.m. in the Common Council Chambers at Waukesha City Hall.

"I frequently get questions from citizens about whether the city has explored different options for its water needs," Nelson said. "This meeting will help answer those questions and explain the many options we have looked at."

The Mayor said Waukesha must find an alternative to its current use of the deep aquifer. "The regional use is many times what the deep aquifer could supply on a sustainable basis. In addition, water quality problems are increasing," Nelson said.

"The good news is that the deep aquifer will begin to recover if area utilities stop using the deep aquifer. From both an environmental and a public health perspective, we must find a new, sustainable water supply," he said. "As Mayor, I am committed to finding an affordable, healthy and environmentally sustainable source of water."

The Mayor said the Waukesha Water Utility has studied water supply options for several years, beginning with the Future Water Supply Study by CH2M Hill and Ruckert/Mielke in 2002. Exploration of the different options has continued since then.

Nelson said Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak will discuss the utility's analysis of the various options that have been considered, including Lake Michigan surface water, the shallow aquifer, the sandstone (deep) aquifer, the Rock River, the Fox River, Pewaukee Lake, the Waukesha quarry, groundwater recharge, water conservation, wastewater reuse and water treatment, among others.

Nelson said many options are not feasible for legal, technical, environmental or public health reasons. "Many people are unaware of the number of options that we have looked at or why a certain option may not work," he said. "We hope this meeting will give the public a better understanding of our realistic choices."

The Mayor said the city is committed to being a leader in water conservation (see www.ci.waukesha.wi.us/WaterUtility/index.html for city conservation plan details). “Our water use has declined 25% since 1988, despite a 17% increase in population. We have the most comprehensive water conservation program in the Midwest, including our 9-to-5 ban on lawn sprinkling,” he said. “We plan to reduce our per capita water use by 20% by 2020. But we can’t reduce water use by the huge percentages that would be required to continue on our current supply.”

The sustainable supply from the current source, the deep aquifer, is 1 million gallons per day (mgd), but Waukesha uses about 8 mgd. Other area municipalities also use the same water supply. “If we seek shallow groundwater from western Waukesha County, people will again be concerned about sustainability and about potential impacts on lakes, streams and wetlands. But if we decide to use Lake Michigan surface water instead and have return flow, it would be sustainable. There would be no impact on lake levels and no depletion of the resource.”

Nelson said the Waukesha Common Council has not made a decision on which option to pursue, but that said the upcoming public discussion will help make it clear that the realistic options are limited. “I think this discussion will be helpful for government officials, as well as the public,” he said.

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