

For Immediate Release

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Waukesha to present draft application for Great Lakes water at January 28 public meeting

WAUKESHA – The Waukesha Water Utility will present a draft application for a new Lake Michigan water supply to the Common Council and the public at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan 28. The meeting will be held at City Hall, 201 Delafield St., in the Common Council Chambers.

“We want to give the public time to review the application,” Mayor Larry Nelson said. “The water utility and the Common Council will be holding additional meetings to hear public feedback and questions on the draft application,” he said. The city may decide in March or April whether to apply to the Department of Natural Resources to use Great Lakes water and to recycle it back to the lake.

The public is invited to attend the Jan. 28 meeting. It will be carried live in Waukesha on cable channel 25 and rebroadcast later. Following the presentation, the water utility will first respond to questions from members of the Common Council and Water Utility Commission and then to questions from the public.

Additional public meetings will be scheduled by the Waukesha Water Utility and the Common Council to receive public comments. “We want to be sure the public sees a draft of the application prior to those meetings, which is why we are making it available on January 28,”

Mayor Nelson said. “However, the draft will undergo additional changes as we continue to develop it and as we get feedback from the public and others.”

Previously-released documents on the city’s potential applications, including answers to questions submitted by a coalition of environmental groups, are available at <http://www.ci.waukesha.wi.us/web/guest/futurewatersupplyinfo>. The draft application will be available January 28 at 7 pm.

Despite being the Midwest’s leader in water conservation, Waukesha needs a new water supply due to severe drawdowns in the deep aquifer – the water supply used by Waukesha and several other cities in southeastern Wisconsin. The drawdown is partially the result of a geological feature that limits the recharge of the aquifer from rain and snow in much of the region.

“We cannot continue to use the deep aquifer; it’s unsustainable,” Nelson said. “With Lake Michigan, we can recycle the water back to the source after its use. We cannot do that with groundwater.”

Waukesha has agreed to a consent order with the state Department of Justice to reduce or eliminate the radium from its water supply. However, radium is just one of the growing number of quality and quantity problems associated with the deep aquifer. For instance, some Waukesha wells are drawing water that is essentially salt water due to contaminant levels that increase as the city goes deeper for water. The city has also pumped water with temperatures as high as 98 degrees. In addition, pumping water from large depths consumes large amounts of energy and increases costs.

The drawdown in the deep aquifer also harms southeastern Wisconsin surface water by reducing needed groundwater flow and discharge to area streams and lakes. On the other hand, ending the use of the aquifer will help the aquifer recover and improve surface waters throughout southeastern Wisconsin.

Water use by customers of the Waukesha Water Utility dropped 25% from 1988 to 2004, despite a 17% increase in population. However, the utility adopted a comprehensive water conservation plan in 2006 to achieve further reductions, with a goal of 20% less water use per capita by 2020. The City of Waukesha’s new plan, including a daytime ban on sprinkling and approval of the state’s first conservation rate structure for water, has made it the Midwest’s leader in water conservation efforts and has already reduced water use by 11% since implementing the plan.

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