

For immediate release

Friday, March 12, 2010

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Waukesha, Wauwatosa leaders agree to hold open house on Waukesha water diversion plan

March 22nd open house will help educate Wauwatosa residents

Waukesha Mayor Larry Nelson and Wauwatosa Mayor Jill Didier announced an open house to be held in Wauwatosa that will provide information on Waukesha's draft plan for Lake Michigan water. The open house will be similar to those that have been conducted for Waukesha residents and other people seeking information and answers to questions related to the water utility's draft application for Great Lakes water. The event is open to the public and will be held March 22 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Wauwatosa Library Firefly Room, 7635 W. North Avenue.

"From day one, it has been our goal to seek public input from citizens and communities who may potentially be affected by our plan," said Waukesha Mayor Larry Nelson. "We've been encouraged by the positive input from our own residents and believe that by offering information to the citizens of Wauwatosa and providing an opportunity to interact with the technical experts, comments, we will strengthen our final application." The mayor said written comments will be accepted at the event and until March 26.

The open house comes on the heels of two successful presentations held for Waukesha residents and more than seven weeks after the water utility's release of a draft application for Lake Michigan water. The draft application includes a main document of approximately 80

pages, along with approximately 2,000 pages of appendices that provide further documentation and analysis of water supply options.

The Great Lakes Compact, which governs the application for Great Lakes water, requires that the water used by Waukesha be treated and returned to Lake Michigan. Waukesha Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak said the draft application recommends the use of Underwood Creek for the purpose of returning the diverted water back to the lake.

“Our analysis shows that by using Underwood Creek for return flow we will be able to increase the amount of water that regularly travels through the creek and improve the plant and animal habitat,” said Duchniak. “It would be an exciting development for both communities if the return of Lake Michigan water leads to a healthier waterway.”

A recent poll conducted by the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee found widespread support for the use of Great Lakes water by the City of Waukesha. When asked whether they support Waukesha’s application for the use of Lake Michigan water, over 68% of respondents from southeast Wisconsin expressed support as long as the water was returned to Lake Michigan. Waukesha’s draft application provides for the return flow of lake water as is outlined in the Great Lakes Compact.

Waukesha is under a court order to reduce radium to federally-mandated levels by June of 2018. Under the most optimistic timetables for government approvals, design and construction, the city has only an 18-month buffer to accommodate potential delays. Fines for noncompliance are as high as \$10,000 per well per day.

Waukesha is a leader in water conservation. It established a goal in 2006 of reducing per capita water use by 20% by 2020 and has reduced overall use by 11% in only three years with water conservation rates, daytime sprinkling bans, public education, toilet rebate programs and other measures. However, water conservation alone cannot solve its water supply problems.

Duchniak emphasized the need for a decision on a new water supply. “The recharge of our current water supply is limited and the aquifer we rely on is dropping five to nine feet per year. As the supply diminishes, water quality is dropping causing greater radium contamination and other water quality problems.” he said. “We’ve been studying water supply alternatives for more than 25 years. It’s time to take action to secure a long-term, healthy water supply.”

The open house will include displays and handouts at stations on several issues, including the need for a new water supply and water supply alternatives, as well as proposed methods of returning water to Lake Michigan after use and treatment. Charts will be on display that will display the impact on return flow on various waterways. Another station will outline the requirements of the Great Lakes Compact. The format will allow attendees to interact one-on-one with the engineers and water experts who have been engaged in preparing the draft report.

Documents related to the draft application and water supply alternatives analysis are available to public on-line in the Future Water Supply section at www.ci.waukesha.wi.us. They

are also available for review in hard copy at the Waukesha Water Utility, located at 115 Delafield Street, Waukesha, WI 53188.

The next opportunity for public input on this matter is tentatively scheduled before the Waukesha Water Commission on March 18, 2010. Written comments will be accepted on the application until March 26. The draft application will likely be before the Waukesha Common Council on April 8 before being submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for its review. Finally, the matter will be presented to the governors of other Great Lakes states for their final approval.