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Waukesha Common Council Discusses Water Negotiations

The Waukesha Common Council on Thursday began the process of outlining the formal relationship between the Council, including the Mayor, and the team that it recently appointed to carry out negotiations for a potential sale of Great Lakes water to the community.

“While the negotiators may be the people attending the sessions, it will be the elected officials that will provide us with firm direction and ultimately approve any agreement on behalf of the city,” said Steve Crandell, the spokesperson of the Waukesha Team and soon-to-be interim City Administrator.

Last month, the Common Council voted to create a water negotiating team that consisted of Community Development Director Crandell, as well as City Administrator Lori Luther and Water Utility Manager Dan Duchniak. Crandell was also assigned the role of disseminating any and all information regarding negotiations to the Council and to the public. Crandell has indicated that he will work to maximize transparency in the process through meetings with the Common Council, the issuance of written updates, press releases to the media and general public and updates on the city’s official web page.

“Obviously, anytime that you are negotiating with another party a limited amount of information must be confidential in order to bargain for the best deal,” said Waukesha Common Council President Paul Ybarra. “However, the Council has made it very clear to Steve and other members of the team that we want to keep the public informed and up to date to the greatest extent possible.”

In addition to addressing the reporting relationship with the negotiating team, the Common Council on Thursday discussed the broad topics of negotiation. The discussion included considerations such as financial, technical, water conservation and other issues that may come up in the course of negotiation.

“Choosing a new water supply to ensure the future good health of our community is a major task and a significant responsibility,” said Crandell. “I know I speak for the whole team when I say that we feel confident in our mission because of the strong support and direction that we’ve received from the members of the Common Council.”

Formal meetings with the potential supplier communities of Oak Creek, Racine and Milwaukee have not yet been set. Crandell indicated that he hopes that initial discussions will begin before the end of the summer.

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