

Water diversion planning nearing completion

Great Water Alliance reps share updated info at New Berlin meeting

By **Dave Fidlin**
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NEW BERLIN — The long and winding road to solidifying plans for Waukesha's oft-discussed diversion of a Lake Michigan-derived water supply is rounding the bend and nearing completion.

Waukesha officials continue discussing plans with impacted municipalities and state agencies on the diversion plan. Officials in New Berlin, one of the impacted neighboring communities, hosted an informational meeting Tuesday on the project, which could begin with pipeline construction next year.

New Berlin Mayor Dave Ament was on hand at the meeting, as were representatives from Great Water Alliance, the program established to address the full scope of the extensive undertaking, which came to be once the members of the Great Lakes Compact signed off on Waukesha's diversion request.

At the open house-style meeting at New Berlin's council chambers, Ament continued to emphasize many aspects of the project are outside the city's hands because Waukesha's water supply has been deemed a public safety issue.

But Ament and others on New Berlin's behalf implored representatives of the Great Water Alliance to provide as much timely, up-to-date information as possible, particularly when there is a pivot from a prior plan.

At Tuesday's meeting, renderings revealed a few tweaks to prior conceptual designs pertaining to the route the pipes would traverse through New Berlin.

The Great Water Alliance has established a website, greatwateralliance.com, and is intended to serve as a repository of information, said Catharine Richardson,

the program's project manager.

"We're working to get as much information out there as possible," Richardson said. "Our intent isn't to confuse people."

Richardson and others associated with the planning said project specifics will remain fluid in the months ahead until a number of state agencies activate the green light. A review from the Army Corp of Engineers also is required.

Other municipalities intricately involved in the review process include Franklin, Milwaukee, Muskego and West Allis.

Dan Duchniak, Waukesha Water Utility manager, was unable to attend the meeting in New Berlin on Tuesday. In a follow-up interview with The Freeman on Tuesday evening, he said the alliance and city officials want to take all of the input from surrounding communities into consideration.

"This is the end of a 3-year-long planning process," Duchniak said, pointing out 90 percent of the logistics are in place.

Infrastructure

The project calls for constructing two 9-million-gallon reservoirs and a pump station in Minooka Park, near South Swartz Road and County Highway Y.

The official water pipeline route in New Berlin has not been selected, though the preferred route is Oklahoma Avenue to National Avenue, from National Avenue to Coffee Road and from Coffee Road to Racine Avenue.

Duchniak said the aesthetics of the pump station and reservoirs have been a point of concern, particularly from residents close to the would-be structures.

But the goal, Duchniak said, is to create infrastructure that will be as unassuming as possible to the casual observer.