

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information, contact:

Mayor Larry Nelson

262.524.3697

Dan Duchniak, Water Utility General Manager

262.521.5272 ext. 518

**Waukesha Common Council to host Monday public meeting
on potential use of Great Lakes water**

WAUKESHA – The Waukesha Common Council and the Water Utility Commission will hold a joint meeting at 7 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 12, to hear a presentation about the city's potential application for Lake Michigan water. The meeting will be held at City Hall, 201 Delafield St., in the Common Council Chambers.

The public is invited to attend. The meeting will be carried live 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 written questions from the public.

The meeting is the latest in a series of public meetings on the potential application for Great Lakes water. Several additional meetings will be held by the city over the next few months. Mayor Larry Nelson said, "We will be providing detailed information on our potential application. We'll also give the public the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments before the Water Utility Commission and the Common Council make a final decision. Our expectation is to have a decision on whether to apply for Lake Michigan water early next year."

Previously-released documents on the city's potential applications, including answers to questions submitted by a collation of environmental groups, are available at <http://www.ci.waukesha.wi.us/web/guest/futurewatersupplyinfo>.

Despite being the Midwest's leader in water conservation, the city 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.

"The State has designated the groundwater here as an area of concern because of the declining water levels and the negative impacts that has on area lakes and streams," the mayor said. "Using Great Lakes water is the most environmentally responsible option."

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.

The city will seek public input at several public meetings on the proposal to use and return Great Lakes water. An application must be recommended by the water utility commission and then approved by the Waukesha Common Council before being submitted to the Department of Natural Resources for review. The proposal would then need the approval of the governors of the eight Great Lakes states, with input from the Canadian Provinces, under the recently enacted Great Lakes Compact.

“We will continue to be happy to hear from or meet with the public and government officials throughout the process so that we can develop the best application we can,” Nelson said.

Nelson was a strong supporter of the Great Lakes Compact and advocated for its passage by the Wisconsin Legislature and Congress last year. The Compact generally prohibits diversions of water beyond the surface divide that defines the Great Lakes basin, but makes exceptions for communities, such as Waukesha, in counties that straddle the divide. The city must meet certain strict conditions, including water conservation, return of the water it uses to the lake, and obtaining the permission of the eight Great Lakes governors.

“The Compact was designed by the Great Lakes states and enacted by Congress to ensure that our water will never be shipped off to Las Vegas or Atlanta,” the mayor said. “But the Compact does allow nearby communities like Waukesha to apply for Great Lakes water if we meet its standards, including recycling the water back to the lake after use. We believe that our application will show that the Compact works as intended in both protecting the environment and meeting water supply needs.”

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