

**For immediate release**

Thursday, Jan. 28, 2010

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## **Waukesha to present water alternatives tonight**

**Additional public meetings will be held to hear public comments**

**on draft application for Great Lakes water**

The Waukesha Water Utility will present an in-depth analysis of future water supply alternatives to the citizens of the City of Waukesha at 7 p.m. tonight at City Hall. The water alternatives analysis is part of a draft application for Lake Michigan water.

“At this point, the application is only a draft,” Mayor Larry Nelson said today. “We want to give the Common Council, the Water Utility Commission and the public time to review and comment on the draft before the Common Council decides on whether to apply for Great Lakes water as early as this March or April. It is important to provide opportunities for an open discussion about this critical public health issue.” Mayor Nelson made it clear that the final decision on whether to pursue Lake Michigan water lies with the Common Council.

The analysis of the environmental impacts, the costs and sustainability of deep aquifer, shallow aquifer and Lake Michigan water supply alternatives is about 80 pages, but is supported by approximately 2,000 pages of supporting documentation and appendices. Although it was prepared as a draft application for Lake Michigan water, the report also examines the feasibility of groundwater sources. Dan Duchniak, general manager of the Waukesha Water Utility, said that the utility and others have been studying water supply alternatives for more than two decades and that millions of dollars have been spent on planning, science and engineering related to southeastern Wisconsin water supply alternatives. He said that the draft application compiles and summarizes many of those studies.

Action is required by the City of Waukesha because continued use of the current deep aquifer source is unsustainable. The city is under a court order to reduce or eliminate radium from its water supply. However, radium is just one of a growing number of quality and quantity

problems with the deep aquifer supply, which is declining by five to nine feet per year due in part to a shale layer that limits the infiltration of rain and snowmelt to the deep aquifer.

Mayor Nelson said that Waukesha must find a new source of safe, reliable water despite the success of the city's extensive water conservation efforts, including a ban on daytime sprinkling, approval of the state's first conservation rates for water, a toilet rebate program and extensive public education. The utility set a goal in 2006 of reducing water use by 20% per capita by 2020 and has already seen an 11% reduction in just the first three years.

"I'm extremely proud of our leadership on water conservation. However, continuing to use the deep aquifer will not meet the needs of our customers for a sustainable, safe and reliable supply of drinking water," Mayor Nelson said. "We need to move forward with identifying and implementing a new water supply."

The study considers a number of issues, including the long-term costs and environmental impacts, of several alternatives. A key finding in the analysis shows that groundwater alternatives are just as expensive as drawing water from Lake Michigan. The report also indicates that groundwater alternatives are not as sustainable as lake water and would have adverse impacts on the environment and on local water resources. According to CH2MHill, which prepared the report for the Waukesha Water Utility, the city should not rely on groundwater for a long-term sustainable water supply.

"Taking into account cost, sustainability and the environment, the analysis makes a strong case that Lake Michigan is the only reasonable alternative for the long-term health of our community and our customers," Duchniak said.

The draft application also outlines an option for the utility to return water to Lake Michigan by pumping it to a tributary, most likely Underwood Creek. The city would monitor its withdrawal and return flow on a daily basis to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Great Lakes Compact to return the withdrawn water to the lake, less consumptive use. In addition, Waukesha's application would also create a goal of exceeding the requirements of the Compact by returning 100% of the water withdrawn from the lake, when measured over a five-year period.

The presentation on the draft application is just the latest in a series of public meetings that the city has held on the water supply issue, Mayor Nelson said. The water utility will hold a public meeting on the draft application at 7 p.m. on February 25, at which the public can comment on the draft or ask questions. Also, the Waukesha Common Council will hold a Committee of the Whole session at 7 p.m. on March 8 regarding the application, at which the public is encouraged to participate and provide input.

Mayor Nelson said he anticipates that that Common Council will likely vote on whether to submit the application for Lake Michigan water at a regular Common Council meeting on March 16 or April 8.

In addition to the several opportunities for the public to provide input, all documents will soon be available to the public on-line at [www.ci.waukesha.wi.us](http://www.ci.waukesha.wi.us), as well as in hard copy at the Waukesha Water Utility, located at 115 Delafield Street, Waukesha, WI 53188.

The executive summary of the draft application for Lake Michigan water is attached.