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New water supply meets 50% completion deadline ***Waukesha construction project on time and on budget***

WAUKESHA – The City of Waukesha has met the legal deadline to complete 50 percent of its Lake Michigan water supply construction project, Mayor Shawn Reilly said today.

“We are on time and on budget,” Reilly said. “We’re closing in on bringing a new supply of water to Waukesha in 2023 that will be safe and reliable for the long term.”

Waukesha is required to comply with federal drinking water standards for radium by September 1, 2023, but it also faced a deadline to have construction of the new water supply project at least 50 percent complete by May 31, 2022.

“Today, our contractors officially notified the Waukesha Water Utility that we reached the halfway mark at the end of January,” Reilly said. “This is a significant milestone with our project. If we had not gotten to 50 percent in time, we would have had to spend up to \$5 million on studies and temporary radium treatment facilities that won’t be needed after we switch to Great Lakes water. I am proud that our team avoided this expense for ratepayers.”

While safe to drink, Waukesha’s current groundwater supply does not fully meet federal radium standards. The supply is also severely depleted, making long-term use unsustainable. After years of study, the city determined it must switch to a Lake Michigan water supply to address both the sustainability and water quality issues. This was approved by Great Lakes governors in 2016.

The city’s project, dubbed the Great Water Alliance, includes a pipeline to bring Lake Michigan water from the Milwaukee Water Works to Waukesha, and another pipeline to return it to the Great Lakes Basin after use and treatment. It also includes other infrastructure, including the new booster pumping station being built in east-central Waukesha, off East Broadway east of Les Paul Parkway.

Construction crews have completed 21 of the 36 miles of water supply and return flow pipelines, Reilly said. “The pipelines are actually 56.3 percent complete, but the 50 percent compliance mark is determined by the percentage of overall construction costs that has been billed by contractors.” Overall construction costs include the pipelines, the



reservoirs in Waukesha, booster pump stations in Waukesha and Milwaukee, and the return flow pump station in Waukesha.

The design engineers from Greeley and Hansen and the construction managers from Black & Veatch informed the Waukesha Water Utility Commission today that they have certified the 50% completion. A copy of the certification was submitted today to the Wisconsin Department of Justice and the Department of Natural Resources to comply with the court order.

The project to borrow and return Lake Michigan water required years of design and permitting after the Compact approval in 2016. Construction began in late 2020 and is expected to be completed by the fall of 2023.

“A significant challenge was the time it took to switch the design from an Oak Creek water supply to one from the Milwaukee Water Works,” Reilly said. “But the deal we negotiated with Milwaukee in 2017 will save the average residential ratepayer more than \$200 per year, due to a shorter pipeline and lower annual payments to their utility. That will keep more than \$4 million per year in the Waukesha economy.”

Reilly noted that the project is funded through low-interest state and federal loans, which are repaid by ratepayers. A competitive federal loan awarded to the city will save ratepayers \$1 million per year, he said. “No property tax dollars are used for water or wastewater projects. The costs are paid by users through their rates,” he added.

Reilly said it has taken 20 years of effort by many people to reach this point. “There is no shortage of people who deserve thanks for their dedication to this effort,” he said. “The water utility, the construction crews, our technical experts and city officials all deserve our gratitude. But I also appreciate the continuing support of Waukesha families and businesses and the patience of our neighboring communities during construction.”

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