



'Leaders work together and push forward toward real, long-term solutions'

By Matt Masterson

Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow is calling on leaders from the city and county of Milwaukee to rethink their opposition to the city of Waukesha's Great Lakes water diversion application.

In a letter to the editor submitted Wednesday, Farrow said he has enjoyed intergovernmental partnerships and discussions on economic development with both Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele, but said their version of regional cooperation "has seemed like a one-way street headed toward Milwaukee."

"If the city of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County were to publicly support Waukesha's water application, it would go a long way to balancing a fundamentally imbalanced relationship," Farrow said in the letter. "True leaders do not focus on the short-term, don't overvalue political victories, or search for reasons not to do things that will clearly benefit others within the region.

"Leaders work together and push forward toward real, long-term solutions."

On Tuesday, both Barrett and Abele appeared at a Department of Natural Resources public hearing in Milwaukee to say they wouldn't be supporting the diversion of Lake Michigan water to the city of Waukesha and an expanded service area that could contain parts of the City of Pewaukee and the towns of Waukesha, Genesee, and Delafield in the future.

A former state senator, Farrow said he voted in favor of the Milwaukee Bucks arena plan as well as multiple state

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Paul Farrow and James Wigderson give support for water diversion.

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Farrow



Water

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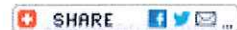
budgets that directed hundreds of millions of dollars from around the state into Milwaukee Public Schools.

"When the Milwaukee Bucks needed support from the state Legislature to help build a new arena many public officials and business leaders in Waukesha County publicly

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supported state funding of the project," Farrow said. "They understood that some issues are too important to the region as a whole to remain divided by 124th Street."

Continued discussion

The Department of Natural Resources scheduled three public hearings this month to let residents across southeast Wisconsin express their opinions on the proposed plan, which the DNR has been reviewing for the past five years.

During the Waukesha hearing Monday — the first of the three — local officials from across Waukesha County and beyond sat beside the 200-plus attendees and were among the 50 or so speakers who provided oral comments to the DNR during more than two hours of testimony.

Waukesha Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak said the two latter hearings — held in Milwaukee and Racine — followed suit, with at least a hundred attendees at each and dozens of public comments.

"I think there was a lot of really good public participation throughout the area ... and really good information on both sides," he said. "Overall the hearings were a very good component of our application. They are going to provide us with a lot of information that is out there and in the end it will make our application that much stronger."

While the Milwaukee hearing more closely mirrored the one in Waukesha, Duchniak said citizens in Racine focused on the water's return flow route in the Root River.

Waukesha Mayor Shawn Reilly and Aldermen Joe Pieper and Andy Reiland joined Duchniak at each Tuesday hearing to discuss their backing of the proposed plan.

Moving forward

A day after the hearings concluded, DNR spokeswoman Jennifer Sereno said the department did not yet have concrete numbers on how many people attended and spoke during the three separate meetings.

She did say the DNR was thankful to all the citizens, stakeholders and groups who turned out Monday and Tuesday.

"We were really grateful that we had a variety of opinions and really a spectrum of views that were brought forward both concerned but also supportive," she said. "We take very seriously the comments that are coming in."

All comments will eventually be published by the DNR, and written comments can still be submitted until Aug. 28.

Once all comments have been collected, the DNR is expected to spend much of the rest of this year reviewing them before issuing final versions of its environmental impact statement and technical review sometime this winter.

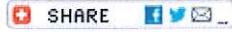
In a memo sent Tuesday, the Milwaukee-based Plumbers Union Local 75 said approval of the application is "common sense," as it would help create approximately 300 full-time jobs during a three-year construction phase, providing not only an economic boom to the area, but also a reliable and safe water source to Waukesha.

Business leaders across Waukesha County were also united in their support of the diversion plan.

The Waukesha County Business Alliance was represented at both the Waukesha and Milwaukee hearings, and WCBA President Suzanne Kelley said the application has been vetted by its Infrastructure Policy Committee, Policy Board and Board of Directors — which all came to the same conclusion.

"... we remain convinced that Waukesha's application provides the only practical, environmentally sound and long-term solution for the city's inhabitants and its workers," Kelley said Monday. "Whether you are looking at this from the perspective of a business person or an environmentalist, the city's application is the only solution that really makes sense."

Email: mmasterson@conley.net



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