

WAUKESHA WATER UTILITY

Commission still undecided on water supply recommendation

By Hannah Weikel
Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — City residents will have to wait a little longer to find out where their drinking water will be coming from and how much rates will increase when the city switches to Great Lakes water in five or six years.

Waukesha Water Utility Manager Dan Duchniak said Thursday that the Water Utility Commission does not have enough information yet to make a recommendation to the Common Council, which is the first step in the city's decision-making process. The group went into a closed session Thursday evening to discuss ongoing negotiations and proposal details.

Negotiations haven't been finalized with Oak Creek, which was Waukesha's choice for water supply when Milwaukee came forward in May with an unsolicited proposal to sell Lake Michigan water.

Duchniak said the Water Utility Commission will not be ready to make a recom-

mendation to the full Common Council at its next meeting on Sept. 5. The commission meets only once a month, but he expects they have all the information needed to reach a recommendation agreement by Sept. 28 during their next meeting.

From there, the public will be notified and given the chance to share thoughts or concerns with aldermen and the full council will make a final decision sometime in October, Duchniak said.

Lingering questions

Duchniak said the water utility has been getting a lot of questions about the pipeline route, water supplier, return flow, cost, timing, water quality and transition to a new water supply.

Water rates for homes in Waukesha's service area could double or triple once Great Lakes water comes online, which has many residents worried.

When news of Milwaukee's unsolicited proposal first broke in July, several city residents sounded off

and urged Waukesha officials not to engage with Milwaukee for water.

In an email to The Freeman, longtime Waukesha resident Craig Tallar said: "With the current and last several years of fiscal issues to which Milwaukee is growing in debt; all they are seeking 'now,' is someone to provide funding for their failing county and high costs by lawsuits. The current engagement with Oak Creek should remain intact."

Tallar said despite the shorter distance between Waukesha and Milwaukee than with Oak Creek, Milwaukee has issues with their water distribution and wastewater.

Duchniak said negotiations haven't started over Milwaukee's proposal. All communication with Milwaukee has been over the details of their original proposal, so it's not certain if they will be able to offer a better or worse deal than Oak Creek.

Because the two cities are vying for the water sale and Waukesha is in active nego-

At a glance

Where: Waukesha Rotary Building, Frame Park

What: Public informational meeting with Waukesha Water Utility representatives

Who: All utility customers were mailed an invitation

When: Sept. 6, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

tiations with Oak Creek, all meetings over the specifics of each deal are done in closed session and proposal documents are sealed.

Waukesha residents still have time to discuss the two water supply options with experts.

There will be an open house for the public on Sept. 6 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Waukesha Rotary Building where residents can ask questions about the water diversion plan, the pipeline routes and costs.

Although Waukesha will not have a provider picked before the open house, the water utility will have estimated rates and costs for residents as well as water quality information.

Duchniak said the open house will be the first of many as the Great Lakes water diversion project moves forward.

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