

Waukesha sends \$100,000 to Oak Creek for costs, ends water partnership

WAUKESHA — The Waukesha Water Utility made good on its promise to refund Oak Creek \$100,000 for its preliminary work to sell Great Lakes water to Waukesha. A check was sent along with a letter from Mayor Shawn Reilly to Oak Creek Mayor Dan Bukiewicz on Friday.

Oak Creek officials expressed shock and dismay in late October after Waukesha officials announced they'd be purchasing Lake Michigan water from Milwaukee in the future, not Oak Creek.

Now, Oak Creek Water Utility General Manager Mike Sullivan said he appreciates the integrity of Waukesha officials for staying true to their promise to reimburse his city for fees associated with their partnership.

The \$100,000 payment to Oak Creek was agreed upon as part of a memorandum of

understanding between and will go toward consulting fees incurred from their partnership with Waukesha in 2017, said Waukesha Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak in a past interview.

The memorandum was an essential piece used by Waukesha to obtain initial approval from the council of eight Great Lakes governors last summer.

"It was put in (the memorandum) because there was some concern that Milwaukee or someone else would come forward and try to lure us, which happened," Duchniak had said, adding that Oak Creek was a great partner and he wished the deal would have worked, but the numbers "just didn't add up this time and we are looking forward to partnering with Milwaukee."

Milwaukee's final offer was nearly \$40 million cheaper than what Oak Creek

could offer.

In his letter to Bukiewicz, Reilly said he recognized that the final water source decision didn't work out to Oak Creek's advantage.

"We also recognize that your efforts were not without costs. Accordingly, I am enclosing a check for \$100,000. This check is an acknowledgement for the work Oak Creek completed in good faith on behalf of our partnership," Reilly wrote.

Sullivan said in early November that Waukesha's decision left him feeling toyed with and they looked at the opportunity to provide water as a way to lower rates for Oak Creek customers. Still, he said, "we will just keep going on operating the water utility as we have before."

— Hannah Weikel,
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