
Common Council President

15th District Alderman



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City of Milwaukee Common Council

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Potential Water Sale Represents Opportunity for Real Regionalism

There will be many more opportunities for testimony and debate on the issue of whether Milwaukee should sell Lake Michigan water to Waukesha. But today's action by the Public Works Committee set the stage for those discussions. This morning, the committee voted to approve a letter from the City of Milwaukee to Waukesha Mayor Larry Nelson, detailing Milwaukee's expectations for any potential sale of water, regardless of whatever action the Council of Great Lakes Governors might take.

The file that Alderman Bauman and I sponsored, which included the letter, merely lays out some of the ground rules for how the City of Milwaukee plans to evaluate any future sale of water – not just to Waukesha, but to any other adjacent community that expresses interest. As Milwaukee's neighbors demonstrate their desire to become more populated and more urbanized, an abundant supply of high-quality fresh water is the means to that end.

When we talk about selling water, we are talking about more than a mere monetary transaction for H₂O. Population growth, business growth, job migration, evolving transportation needs, transforming infrastructure and overall economic expansion all come into play. If realized, these changes to Waukesha would not only have a significant impact on its own citizens, but also on Milwaukee's citizens.

Based on my own private meetings with Mayor Nelson, I expect him to work hard for a truly regional agreement between Waukesha and Milwaukee. He has expressed his desire to craft a contract that can be a model for future agreements throughout the Great Lakes region. In order to do that, Mayor Nelson will have to garner support from his own constituents and help them realize that a strong Milwaukee is a vital component to a strong Waukesha. Likewise, if an agreement is ever to become a reality, it will be our job to ensure that it is in the best interest of Milwaukee – and the best interest of the region.

As this process continues, the Common Council will need to see evidence that Waukesha wants to be a true regional partner with Milwaukee. It is my hope that a proposal is put forth that respects our legislation and the intrinsic worth of our respective communities.

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