

First contracts for Waukesha water construction are \$20 million under budget

Historic Lake Michigan project reaches a major milestone

WAUKESHA, WI – (June 5, 2020) – After nearly two decades of scientific studies, political challenges, applications to numerous government agencies, and extensive engineering, Waukesha has awarded the first construction bids for its historic Lake Michigan drinking water project.

The first three successful bids came in at more than \$20 million under projected costs.

“The bids awarded by the Common Council this week are great news for our ratepayers,” Waukesha Mayor Shawn Reilly said. “Lower construction costs will help moderate the rate increases needed from families and businesses for our switch to a new water supply.

“Just as importantly, these bid awards mean that we will soon be putting shovels in the ground,” he added. “We are meeting our commitment to provide a safe and sustainable water supply that Waukesha can rely on for generations to come.”

The project, dubbed the Great Water Alliance, will build the pipelines and other infrastructure needed to bring Lake Michigan water to Waukesha and then return it to the Great Lakes Basin after use and treatment. The new water supply will replace existing groundwater supplies that have been severely depleted and contain natural contaminants, including radium.

The project has received review by the ten governors and premiers of the Great Lakes states and provinces, along with a number of Wisconsin and federal regulatory agencies.

The Common Council awarded two bids on Tuesday, June 2, 2020 to construct the return flow pipeline, which will run from the Clean Water Plant in Waukesha to an outfall location along the Root River, a Lake Michigan tributary, in Franklin. S.J. Louis Construction, Inc. was the low bidder on those two packages, at \$80,363,400 for the Waukesha infrastructure.

According to Dan Duchniak, General Manager of the Waukesha Water Utility, those bids were nearly \$12.5 million, or 13.4%, less than estimates by project engineers. “Because of the current economic challenges, we received especially low bids for this work,” he said. “Most of

the labor for the pipeline will be from Wisconsin, and at least 10% of the work must be completed by disadvantaged business enterprises.”

The Council also awarded a bid on Tuesday for the Phosphorus and Return Flow Pumping Station at Waukesha’s Clean Water Plant. C.D. Smith Construction Inc. was the low bidder, at \$17,129,076. “That bid was also nearly \$8.3 million, or 33%, less than estimates. In all, the first three bids are more than \$20 million below what was budgeted,” Duchniak said.

Construction will likely start in August, Duchniak said. “We will be sure that people along the construction routes, whether inside or outside of Waukesha, are well informed before construction begins,” he said. “We are putting a priority on minimizing public impacts however we can. People can also stay up to date by checking the “In Your Area” section and interactive route map at the Great Water Alliance website, greatwateralliance.com.”

The other four construction bid packages, including two water supply pipeline packages and the booster pumping station and water tower, will likely be issued in late 2020 or early 2021. The entire project is anticipated to be completed in 2023.

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