



Tim Rueckert * Republican Candidate * Metropolitan Water Reclamation District When Water Rises, Experience Matters

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Tim4mwrld.com
630-308-8541

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\$390 MILLION SKOKIE PLANT: DO THE MATH BEFORE THE SHOVELS

Rueckert calls for full costs and alternatives before MWRD's Skokie groundbreaking

COOK COUNTY, IL — Before the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) breaks ground on a nearly \$390 million construction project at its O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant in Skokie, Commissioner candidate Timothy E. Rueckert is calling for a clear accounting of the total cost, financing and alternatives.

"MWRD officials get a photo opportunity and a shovel. Taxpayers get the bill—and potentially decades of operating and financing costs," Rueckert said. "Before the shovels go into the ground, taxpayers deserve to see the math."

On June 18, the MWRD Board approved a \$389.9 million construction contract with Michels Construction and another \$19.5 million for potential contract changes, bringing the total authorization to approximately \$409.4 million. MWRD has also described broader O'Brien improvements as nearly \$500 million in clean-water investments.

Those figures may cover different work. Rueckert says MWRD should explain exactly what each includes—and what costs remain.

"The first number is never the whole story," Rueckert said. "There are electricity costs, chemicals, employees, maintenance, repairs and replacement equipment. If the project is financed with borrowed money, there is also interest."

WHY THIS PLAN?

The Battery E project will provide treatment capacity as MWRD modifies the plant to meet tighter phosphorus limits: 1.0 milligram per liter beginning in August 2027 and 0.5 milligram per liter beginning in January 2030. Excess phosphorus can damage rivers and streams.

MWRD's plan uses biological phosphorus removal with chemical treatment as a backup. But changes to existing tanks can reduce capacity for ammonia removal. MWRD has said Battery E will replace some of that lost capacity.

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“How much is for phosphorus? How much is replacing capacity? How much is repairing aging infrastructure? And how much is actually adding new capacity?” Rueckert asked. “Put a number next to each one.”

MWRD’s records indicate its chemical treatment process can meet the 2030 phosphorus standard. That does not settle which approach offers the best value: aging infrastructure and maintenance needs also matter. Rueckert is asking MWRD to show its comparison of alternatives, including expanded chemical treatment, equipment that increases capacity within existing tanks, and chemical treatment with filtration.

“If the \$390 million plan is the best option, then show us why,” Rueckert said.

FIVE QUESTIONS BEFORE THE GROUNDBREAKING

1. What is the total cost? Include construction, potential change orders, related projects and expected additional repairs.
2. How are we paying for it? Identify funding sources, borrowing, interest and repayment obligations.
3. Why was this plan selected? Show the alternatives considered and the estimated cost of each.
4. What will it cost to operate? Show projected electricity, chemical, staffing, maintenance, repair and equipment-replacement costs over 20, 30 and 50 years.
5. Will it save money or avoid future costs? Show how much and when.

“MWRD needs to maintain the plant. Clean water matters. Infrastructure matters,” Rueckert said. “But so does accountability.”

Rueckert’s background includes complex financial criminal and civil matters and eight years overseeing public budgets, roads, stormwater drainage and infrastructure contracts as Northfield Township Highway Commissioner.

The groundbreaking is scheduled for 11 a.m. Thursday, October 8, at the O’Brien Water Reclamation Plant, 3500 Howard Street, Skokie.

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Cook County, Vote 3 for MWRD—#51 Michelle Pennington, #52 Timothy E. Rueckert and #53 Jill B. Shestokas

Elect three new commissioners who will undo mismanagement, demand transparency and ensure that taxpayers will easily see cost to benefit where MWRD must protect the communities affected by its decisions.