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From: Michelle Zdrodowski <michelle.zdrodowski@detroitk12.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2015 6:46 PM
To: connersp@michigan.gov; Muchmore, Dennis (GOV); Walsh, John (GOV); McPhee, Karen (GOV); Murray, David (GOV); Khouri, Nick (TREASURY); Baird, Richard (GOV); Stanton, Terry A. (Treasury); Saxton, Thomas (Treasury); Wurfel, Sara (GOV); Hollins, Harvey (GOV)
Cc: Darnell Earley; Kelly Rossman-McKinney
Subject: Final Flint Water OpEd
Attachments: Flint Water Decision Clarification Op-Ed_FINAL.pdf

All,

Attached is the final Flint Water OpEd that was submitted to the Flint Journal, DetNews, Freep, Michigan Chronicle this evening.

Any questions, please advise.

MZ

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Changes to Flint Water System Made By Local Leaders, Not Emergency Managers

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It is critically important that the record be set straight about the decision-making and approval processes that led to Flint joining the Karegnondi Water Authority (KWA) with the use of Flint River water as the interim water supply. The fact is, that the river has served and been used as the back-up supply for decades, and this was the rationale given to me by staff and Mayor Walling, who also serves as chairperson of the KWA board. Contrary to reports in the media and rhetoric being espoused by individuals, the decision was made at the local level, by local civic leaders.

The decision to separate from Detroit Water and Sewerage Department and go with the KWA, which included the decision to pump Flint River water in the interim, were both a part of a long-term plan that was approved by Flint's Mayor, and confirmed by a City Council vote of 7-1 on March 25, 2013. This plan was presented to me when I was appointed as Flint Emergency Manager in October 2013 - a full seven months after City Council's affirmative vote.

Genesee County Drain Commissioner Jeff Wright also made the affirmative vote by the City Council a necessary condition of joining the KWA, and applauded the decision in a March 26, 2013 news release, saying, "...I have said from the beginning that this decision must be made by Flint's City Council and Mayor...I am glad that the residents of Flint were able to have their voices heard via their elected officials."

The Mayor's approval of the plan, and the subsequent near unanimous vote by City Council were in no way coerced, forced or demanded by the State, nor any Emergency Manager. Council's affirmative vote was supported and officially signed into EM Executive Order by then Emergency Manager Edward Kurtz on March 29, 2013. A subsequent order Kurtz signed on June 26, 2013, speaks specifically to the, "... upgrading of the Flint Water Plant to ready it to treat water from the Flint River to serve as the primary drinking water source for approximately two years and then converting to KWA delivered lake water."

When I began my term as Emergency Manager, it fell to me to oversee the implementation of the previously accepted and approved plans, as the DWSD terminated the contract with Flint in April 2014. It did not fall to me to question, second guess or to invalidate the actions that were taken prior to my appointment.

At the time the decision was made there was no way to predict such an unfortunate outcome. I would also offer that had local leaders known then what they know now, parts of their decision may have been entirely different. What the City of Flint and the State of Michigan are now dealing with is the management of an unintended consequence resulting in a negative outcome from an otherwise sound public policy decision. There is no "blame" to affix on any Emergency Manager for that.