



BH sells water line to Benton Township

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BENTON TOWNSHIP - Benton Township will take over from Benton Harbor the duty of supplying water to Whirlpool Corp.'s World Headquarters Administrative Center along M-63.

The announcement of the plan was made public Tuesday through a joint press release issued by Whirlpool, Benton Harbor, Benton Township and Cornerstone Alliance.

In 1967, Whirlpool paid for the installation of a water line so Benton Harbor could provide water to the administration center in Benton Township. Whirlpool then donated the water line to the city.

With Benton Township's decision to build its own water plant, Whirlpool's arrangement with Benton Harbor was affected because the township will be providing water to every customer surrounding the administration center.

For Benton Township to service the customers near the administration center, the township would have to install a water line parallel to the line built in 1967. Cost estimates showed that would have cost the township about \$1.3 million, according to the news release.

With the agreement announced Tuesday, the township will take ownership of the old water line. In exchange, the township will give Benton Harbor \$675,000.

"This creates a resolution (to the problem) we faced as we work to get our water plant up and operational," Benton Township Supervisor Nora Jefferson said in the release. "This agreement eliminates the need for us to build a duplicate line and results in cost savings for us."

Other parts of the deal include:

-- Benton Harbor can remove the booster station, if the city deems it a feasible project.

-- Benton Harbor waives Whirlpool's requirement to provide a year's notice for canceling its current water contract.

"For the city of Benton Harbor, this is good news as we receive much-needed revenue as we work to get more financially stable," said Joseph Harris, the city's emergency financial manager. "This also eliminates maintenance responsibilities for the aging line from the city, which in all likelihood would be a costly endeavor that would be hard for us to absorb."

The Benton Township water treatment plant structure has been built on North Shore Drive, south of Enterprise Way.

The township will continue to get its water from Benton Harbor until the water treatment equipment is installed in early fall 2011.

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