STATE AFFAIRS
WISPOLITICS
Wisconsin's Premier Political News Service

Milwaukee County, Local Officials: Request support of US Army Corps of Engineers

Posted on Thursday, Apr 2, 2020

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. Get the app or access via desktop.

MILWAUKEE— Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, West Allis Mayor Dan Devine, Milwaukee Commissioner of Health Jeanette Kowalik, Milwaukee County Medical Director Dr. Ben Weston, and the Intergovernmental Cooperation Council have submitted a letter to Governor Evers requesting support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security for the construction of an Alternative Care Facility in Milwaukee County.

The Milwaukee County Unified Emergency Operations Center (UEOC) and local partners are planning ahead to prepare for the predicted surge in COVID-19 patients in the State of Wisconsin. An Alternative Care Facility, to be constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, will provide additional hospital beds for low-acuity COVID-19 patients so local healthcare systems can dedicate their facilities to the most acute cases.

"Preparing for an escalation of COVID-19 cases is critical as we take every possible measure to minimize the impact on our community," said ***Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele****. "We make this urgent request of our State and Federal partners together as one County to support our local healthcare delivery systems in response to this pandemic."*

"As a community, we must move quickly to stay ahead of the virus. We have seen in several communities that hospital systems alone cannot address this pandemic. We must prepare a facility to handle the influx of COVID-19 patients with critical care needs that we can expect to see in the coming weeks," ***said Milwaukee***

Mayor Tom Barrett.

"This is about being proactive and taking a regional approach. We are going to do everything possible to ensure there will be minimal disruption to the surrounding neighborhoods. Our community is looking forward to being a partner in this operation," said ***West Allis Mayor Dan Devine.***

Milwaukee County's UEOC evaluated several possible sites and agreed that Wisconsin State Fair Park, which has several options for large venues, housing, parking and a natural perimeter, is best suited for the facility. Wisconsin State Fair Park officials have worked extensively with the UEOC to create an actionable plan to utilize their facilities.

"We have been working diligently with local, state and federal officials on determining if Wisconsin State Fair Park facilities could meet the needs of an Alternative Care Facility," stated ***John Yingling, Chairman of the Wisconsin State Fair Park Board of Directors****. "Now that it has been decided that our facilities are best suited should there be a need, the State Fair Park board and staff will proudly do our part to assist our state's healthcare workers contain the spread of COVID-19 and ultimately help the great state of Wisconsin on its road to recovery."*

Upon approval, the facility would be built out by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to provide patient care capacity for non-acute individuals with COVID-19.

The Corps usually takes about one to two weeks to prepare and build such facilities, but their recent work in Chicago at the McCormick Place Convention Center has proven their ability to engineer and build them rapidly.

Funding for construction will come from the federal and state government. Local firms will be contracted to assist the US Army Corps of Engineers in building the site.