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## Frederick Water, Carmeuse reach new agreement

By MICKEY POWELL The Winchester Star  
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**WINCHESTER** — Frederick Water will be able to withdraw as much water as it needs from Carmeuse Lime & Stone quarries in the future under a permanent agreement they have reached.

It also will eventually be able to purchase the quarries, helping to ensure that water is available to meet Frederick County's needs well into the future.

Frederick Water is a public authority providing water and sewer services to more than 16,000 local homes and businesses. A previous agreement called for the authority to pay approximately \$850,000 a year for the right to withdraw 2 million gallons of water per day (MGD) from Carmeuse's northernmost quarries. The water has been fed to the James T. Anderson Water Treatment plant, on Carmeuse property off Brucetown Road in Clear Brook.

However, Executive Director Eric Lawrence said Frederick Water in recent years has paid Carmeuse more than \$1 million annually, as it has taken more than 2 MGD from the quarries. More water has been needed largely due to economic growth within the county, he said.

The new pact does not limit the amount of water that the authority can withdraw. Yet it reduces the yearly amount paid to Carmeuse to about \$500,000, regardless of how much water is acquired, Lawrence said.

"That lowers our operational costs," he said. "I don't think customers are going to see lower rates. But I think it will put us in a position to not have to raise rates ... and (be able to) plan for capital improvements to maintain the system for the long term."

The Anderson plant has capacity to produce about 3½ MGD of treated water daily. Plans are to increase water production to about 4 MGD, according to Lawrence.

Frederick Water's right to continue taking water from the quarries is specified in the new agreement. That right was to have expired under the previous one.

Included in the new deal are options enabling Frederick Water to buy the two Carmeuse quarries where it obtains water, after mining operations are finished. That will provide the authority roughly 3 billion gallons of water storage capacity, which is "sufficient to meet our community's daily water demands for nearly a year" if an emergency such as an extreme drought occurs, Lawrence said. Many localities do not have such reserves, he pointed out.

Lawrence was unable to specify how much it will cost Frederick County to buy the quarries. Costs will be determined by "a complex formula" based on "how long we want to rent the quarries (for water withdrawals) and when we decide to buy" them.

Kevin Whyte Sr., Carmeuse's vice president for legal, environmental and business development, called the new agreement "a real win-win-win for everyone involved."

"As the county continues to grow over the next several decades and the demand for water only increases," Whyte said, "utilizing our inactive quarries for water storage just makes sense for everyone."

Limestone in the quarries is a natural filter resulting in exceptionally high-quality water, he said. So "our unique water assets offer Frederick Water a reliable and cost-effective solution that every resident of the county will benefit from, both financially and environmentally, for generations." Lawrence made a similar comment.

Frederick Water's original agreement was inked 20 years ago with Global Stone Chemstone Corp., which Carmeuse bought in 2008. Five years later, the authority and Carmeuse entered into an agreement that superseded the original one. The later agreement removed Frederick Water's right to use abandoned quarries but allowed the authority to lease the property on which the Anderson plant sits and an adjacent quarry for seven years.

The Opequon Water Supply Plan anticipates Frederick Water customers may need up to 12 million gallons of drinking water per day by 2035. To help meet that need, the authority is planning the construction of a new treatment plant off Stephenson Road capable of treating up to 8 MGD. The plant, which will replace Anderson, will be named after Henry F. Sliwinski, a former treatment plant operator.

Seven construction bids have been received for the new plant. Frederick Water's board will consider the bids when it meets later this month, Lawrence said.

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