

## THE MCKOWNVILLE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION: 1924-1984

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For the McKownville Improvement Association

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When the McKownville Improvement Association first met in the schoolhouse at Schoolhouse Road and Western Avenue in May 1924, the issue was to get trackless trolley service into McKownville. The Association was successful and the founding meeting set the pattern for the next sixty years -- neighbors meeting to make sure that McKownville becomes a better place to live.

The particular issues that the Association members discussed are nearly as fascinating as the names of the people who participated in the discussions. No complete record of either exists and Association records prior to 1955 are especially scarce. (If any reader has copies of minutes of meetings prior to 1955, the Association's President, Jim Lane, would like to have the opportunity to make copies).

The first president was Walter Marden. Other presidents (or officers) were: John Feldman, Walter Seim, Ainsworth Scott, Justin Tiernan, C.J. Knoener, August Lux, Mrs. Van Loan, Mr. Roach, Wendell Holmes, Fred Abele, William Mohr, William Nelson, Harry W. Reynders, Gerald Hamm, Charles Maneri, Hugh Prytherch, Andrew Valenti, Donald Munn, James Barber, John Purdy, Mel Behn, John Esler, Tim Cohan, myself (Don Reeb), Lindsay Childs, and Jim Lane.

The discussions which appear in the Association's records are:

1924 trackless trolley service for McKownville

1933 a firehouse for McKownville and sidewalks on Western Avenue (there are still no sidewalks on the south side of Western Avenue)

1934 sewer problems on Arcadia and Hillcrest

1937 the formation of a water and sewer district was requested but not achieved

1940 Association worked to get Western Avenue widened to four lanes

1945 Tracey, Providence, Warren and Mercer streets added to McKownville

1946 another attempt to get a sewer and water district and again not successful

1947 Association gets Town to form Zoning Commission

1948 Association holds bazaar to redecorate firehall

1949 first of many requests for a traffic signal at Fuller and Western and another at Schoolhouse and Western; threat to cut back bus service thwarted by Association

1950 traffic signals again requested for Fuller Road and at Schoolhouse Road and again denied; new water service becomes available

1951 traffic signal for Fuller Road approved; Thruway construction silts reservoir; traffic lights for McKown Road and Arcadia requested but not successfully

1953 Thruway Authority agrees to dredge reservoir

1955 Stuyvesant Plaza property rezoned

1956 test wells to augment reservoir drilled

1957 arterial highway system for Albany discussed

1960 water problems discussed

1962 Quadrini's construction near Hillcrest and sewer problems discussed

1963 State University construction begins

1964 traffic light at McKown Road approved after a child living on Ayre Drive is killed crossing Western Avenue; parking on Fuller Road banned due to University construction; McKownville Water Advisory Board formed; Association requests Town to take steps to protect Church Pond (pond behind McKownville Methodist Church) as water source for McKownville

1965 The severe drought is discussed at the annual meeting; a new firehouse is approved by referendum (357 to 64); Republican primary between Gordon Robinson and Carl Walters is discussed; village incorporation of McKownville is proposed

1966 apartment house on Fuller Road opposed along with rezoning of Schoolhouse Road corner property  
1967 the construction of 1450 Western Avenue is announced; letters are sent complaining about the heating plant of the State University; the Association requests that a lease of the Church Pond property be entered into  
1968 another commercial development, Dunkin' Donuts, is opposed by the Association  
1970 fluoridation of the water system begins and McKown Grove closes  
1971 new sewers for McKownville are announced  
1972 parking problems on Elmwood caused by doctor's offices lead to petition drive  
1973 rezoning on Western Avenue properties opposed  
1975 Church Pond dam is destroyed flooding Western Avenue; arsonist burns several garages in McKownville  
1976 Association successfully opposes the widening of Western Avenue  
1978 Pyramid announces its plans to construct shopping center on Church Pond site; Association expresses concern; consolidation of water district is defeated  
1979 hearing on Pyramid proposal delayed; Association hires attorney to fight Pyramid  
1980 numerous community groups vote to oppose Pyramid; village incorporation for McKownville again discussed; water district consolidation approved  
1982 Neighborhood Watch is instituted and Pyramid battle continues  
1983 commercial rezoning of 50 Fuller Road is successfully opposed by the Association; Pyramid-Crossgates is opened.

The Association's concerns have hardly varied from the beginning; water and sewer service, commercial zoning and sidewalks, traffic signals and bus service. The issues are endlessly repeated in the Association's records. It is often difficult to tell which year the records are for, the issues are so similar year after year.

For sixty years, the McKownville Improvement Association has been an active voice in the community. We are proud to salute the Altamont Enterprise in its one hundred years of service to the community.