

10 Glenwood Street
McKownville, NY
January 26, 2004

Dear neighbor,

In the evening of Christmas Day, after our guest at Christmas dinner had left, my wife, Marjorie, noticed that the sump pump in our cellar was not shutting off. We opened the cellar door and rushed down the stairs to see water gushing out of the sump onto the floor. I put on my boots, grabbed a quart saucepan and a couple of buckets, hurried to the sump and began to bail. My brother was visiting from Washington; he acted as the runner, throwing the dirty water out the north door and onto the snow. After 15 minutes of this I realized I could not keep it up and we stopped our bucket brigade. We were advised by a representative of our fuel oil supplier to turn off the hot water heater.

Next morning there was 3" of water over the cellar floor. The McKownville Fire Department was notified and they kindly pumped us out. After conversing with representatives of the Highway Department and the Department of Water and Wastewater Management, a wonderful friend hooked up a 100-foot length of PVC pipe to a second pump and the cellar has been dry ever since. The rest of this letter is reflections on this situation and the ramifications of it.

A few weeks later a Zoning Enforcement Officer appeared at our door and told us we were in violation of a town ordinance forbidding property owners from discharging water into the street. He had been alerted to the situation--water between our house and Western Avenue having turned to ice had created a hazardous situation for pedestrians--by a member of the Highway Department staff, who had in turn been notified of it by one of our neighbors. The irony of the present reality should not be lost. What happened in our basement on Christmas Day is the direct result of a storm sewer network which is antiquated and broken. It has been antiquated and broken for many years as property owners on the western side of lower Glenwood Street will all testify, and as representatives of the Highway Department and the Department of Water and Wastewater Management freely admit.

The western side of lower Glenwood Street was built in the middle 1920s over an underground stream. We, the Hartzells, have been bothered by poor drainage since we bought our house in 1973, but neighbors to either side, in fact up and down the side and across the bottom of the alley, have been bothered by it on a year-by-year basis much more severely than have we.

The time has come for the residents of our hamlet to petition the Town Board to rectify the situation. Based on discussions held over the last six months and visits to the street by numerous people from the Town, total replacement of the present "antiquated and broken" system is required. A petition to this effect will be circulated at some point in the next two weeks. I urge you to sign it.

Would you please call me if you have been affected by situations remotely similar to ours.

Drew Hartzell
489-2071

