

Not much of an expense

Groups organize to fight McKownville burglaries

1-19-06

By Jarrett Carroll

MCKOWNVILLE — A recent string of burglaries on Providence Street in McKownville has prompted residents of the suburban neighborhood to take action with the help of an improvement association, the Guilderland Police, town hall, and each other.

Tuesday, the town board agreed to having a new street-light installed on the far end of Providence Street, as petitioners had requested.

Only a stone's throw from the Northway, the otherwise quiet neighborhood, nestled next to the Albany city line, is a picturesque place to live, with friendly neighbors and little crime to speak of. Until recently that is.

A string of house break-ins last year ended with "the McKownville burglar," as David Hollenbeck was dubbed, being sentenced in September to 15 years in state prison.

Now, concerned neighbors want to catch whoever is responsible for the theft and vandalism that has been taking place on Providence Street since Christmas.

Investigator David Romano with the Guilderland Police said there have been "a lot of calls" from the neighborhood since late December and he encourages

residents to keep calling if they witness or experience a crime.

"We don't know if they don't call and tell us," he said.

Only one non-related arrest — for a contractor stealing a generator — has been made, said Romano.

He credited Cindy Peaslee, a victim of the vandalism, for her vigilance.

"Cindy is helping us quite a bit in mobilizing the neighbors," said Romano.

"This little episode cost us close to \$2,000," said Peaslee, of 44 Providence Street, about a burglary that took place right outside of the side entrance of her home.

Her long-time boyfriend, who works for Darrah Contracting, parked his truck under a carport next to the house. On Friday night, Jan. 6, between midnight and 4 a.m., a toolbox on the truck was broken into and power tools were stolen.

"It happened in my own driveway, right next to the door to my house," said Peaslee.

The burglary ended up costing more than power tools, because Peaslee went out and bought an array of security devices for her home. Among them were new locks for all the gates, a motion-

(Continued on Page 18)

... Fighting McKownville burglary

(Continued from Page 1)

detector spotlight, and a motion sensor on the driveway that alerts her inside if someone is outside.

"If you put a foot on my driveway, it will ring in my bedroom....It's battery operated," said Peaslee. The detector will ring if there is motion in the driveway, just like a battery operated door bell.

Peaslee noticed other problems after the burglary, too. In her backyard, the gate was open and a wire fence was pushed down into the ground. She told *The Enterprise* she wasn't sure which way the burglars came, from the street in the front or through the backyard.

Another truck was parked outside of a neighbor's house; two tool boxes were broken into with crowbars and \$1,000 worth of tools were stolen, said Peaslee. Also on the same street, a neighbor reported seeing footsteps in the snow leading up to and away from their truck.

A few doors down the street a home was also vandalized. The outside Christmas decorations were pulled out of the ground and all of the wires were cut, said Peaslee. Nothing appeared to be stolen besides decorations. Peaslee said the incidents started occurring right before Christmas.

The neighborhood may be susceptible to these types of robberies because of the amount of contractors currently in the area, according to Peaslee. There was a fire at one home, which is now under reconstruction, another home is getting remodeled, and new homes are being built.

Neighborhood watch

Don Reeb, who heads the McKownville Improvement Association, talked to some of the

Providence Street area neighbors about burglary concerns. He has helped to organize a neighborhood watch, which he says has been very successful in the past.

"I think neighbors looking out for neighbors works very well, whether we're talking about McKownville, or Guilderland Center, or anywhere," said Reeb.

Reeb referred to the burglaries that took place last year on McKown Road, where a very effec-

The residents of Providence Street are hoping more light will help end the current crime spree.

Peaslee started a petition to put in a streetlight at the far end of Providence Street, which currently is very dark at night. She went to her neighbors for support and got 12 signatures, then presented the petition to the Guilderland Supervisor, Kenneth Runion, at an improvement association meeting.

'They don't like light.'

tive neighborhood watch helped Guilderland Police apprehend a burglar. A call from a neighbor who witnessed a break-in made it possible for police to take the burglar off the streets.

On April 15, as many police officers were in McKownville investigating an unrelated incident, a resident called to say that a man broke into his neighbor's window, at 9 McKown Road, and went inside.

Guilderland Police found Hollenbeck crouched behind a bed in the house. He had jewelry and a piggy bank on him, police said, and he confessed to a series of other break-ins. In one case, police said, he stole over \$1,000 worth of jewelry.

Reeb advises neighbors to report suspicious activities, and to call 911 to report a burglary taking place, rather than trying to stop or apprehend the burglar. If 911 is busy or taking too long, Reeb recommends calling the Guilderland emergency dispatch directly at 356-1501 or the Guilderland Police dispatch directly at 482-7554.

"Everyone signed the petition, nobody said no to it, except for just one neighbor who didn't want the light shining into her house," said Peaslee, who went door to door for signatures.

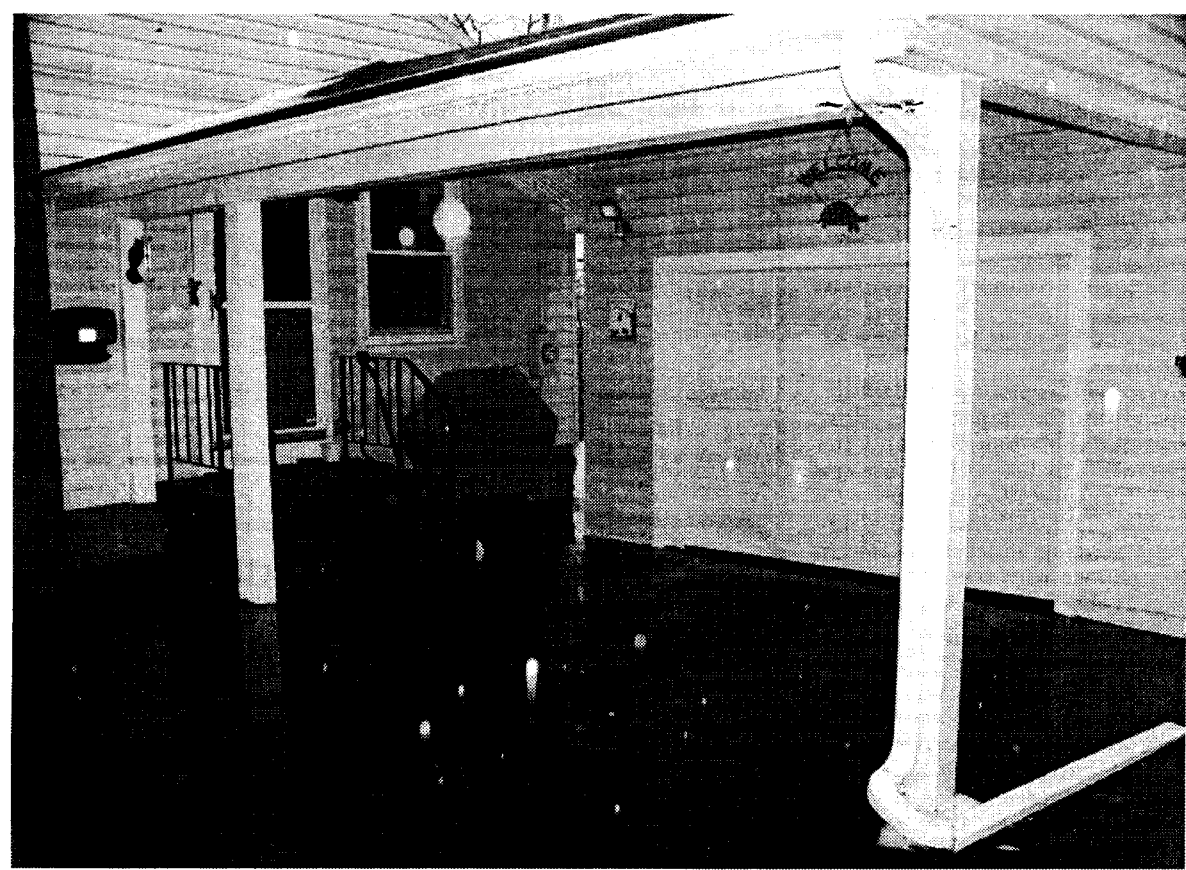
The Guilderland Town Board met on Tuesday night and unanimously accepted the petition asking for another light to be installed on the street. Board members agreed it was a reasonable request that would help make the neighborhood safer.

Reeb said he thought it was the fastest government action he had ever seen. From the first signature on the petition to the town board's passage of it, took a mere 48 hours.

The petition was granted, but Peaslee expressed concern for how long it would take to install. She cited another neighborhood that was granted extra lighting and said it took National Grid eight months to install the light.

Investigator Romano told *The Enterprise* the new streetlight will "definitely help."

He concluded of burglars, "They don't like light."



The Enterprise — Jarrett Carroll

Too close to home: One of several burglaries that took place recently on Providence Street in McKownville, happened next to the side entrance of Cindy Peaslee's home. A truck parked in her driveway was broken into and contractor tools were stolen. Now Peaslee has reinforced her home with extra lights, motion detectors, and locks on her gates.