

Is money in the pipeline for McKownville?

Residents press for stimulus funds to improve sewer system

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McKownville residents are stepping up efforts to secure stimulus money for a much-needed sewer system.

Don Reeb, president of the McKownville Improvement Association has already asked Guilderland Supervisor Ken Runion to forward letters and e-mails to state and national representatives on the neighborhood's behalf, and residents are now sending letters and e-mails directly.

"We're getting kind of desperate to figure out how to get this done," Reeb said. "This is consuming an awful lot of effort."

Reeb said the situation has worsened in recent years.

"It's getting worse partly because the sewer system isn't as good as used to be, and partly because the water levels are going

up and up," Reeb said.

Reeb said he could not say for sure the exact age of the sewer system, but he noted that a portion of the pipes recently dug up were made out of wood.

"The pipes are very, very old," Reeb said.

Runion said the town has applied for a \$5.75 million grant from stimulus money to complete the McKownville project. The town has also applied for a \$2.18 million grant for stormwater improvements at the Curry Road extension and an \$800,000 grant to upgrade the swimming pool and house at Tawasentha Park.

"Those projects are all shovel ready and could be completed within a year," Runion said.

Beau Duffy, spokesman for Rep. Paul Tonko, D-Amsterdam, who represents McKownville, said Tonko has been doing his best to secure funds for local infrastructure initiatives.

"[Tonko's] role right now is to advocate for local projects," Duffy said. "A lot of the grants are competitive."



Pipe

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The McKownville neighborhood is made up of approximately 1,000 homes, and rests near the City of Albany border.

The sewer system is just one of several issues Reeb has raised. He said stormwater is a growing problem in McKownville. Last July, a storm damaged the basement of Ken and Laura Plant when poor water drainage in the area led to the collapse of a portion of the foundation. McKownville residents held fundraisers to help restore the damage.

Reeb said after most storms, the McKownville Fire Department often pumps three to four dozen basements. Sometimes the pumps need to be run 24 hours a day in order to mitigate the water problems.

Reeb also said the problem is getting worse, not better. A national geological testing facility located on the edge of McKownville behind Alumni House at the University at Albany indicated that water levels have risen in recent years, he said. According to the United States Geological Survey, well water has risen approximately 5 feet since August 2002.

He said the University at Al-

bany and the university's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering have also paved several areas of land, and that, coupled with the Nanoscale college draining water to the south, rather than north into Patroon Creek, have contributed to the problem.

He said he asked Runion to apply for federal stimulus money to fix the sewer pipes and improve the water system.

He said another possibility to secure funding for a new sewer system would be for the town to issue a bond. However, in order to do so, the five-member board would need a four-vote supermajority. Reeb indicated he is not optimistic about a getting a supermajority considering a tax raise would come with the bond.

Reeb said the major concern he and other McKownville residents have is the long-term damage that stormwater brings.

"I know there are more important things than storm sewers— but if the flooding problem gets much worse, it will depress home prices and then people will be 'trapped' in their homes — unable to sell them at the expected price — and then the neighborhood becomes a different type of place," he wrote in an e-mail to residents.