

# G'land looks into stormwater issues

**Could bond \$1 million to begin projects in McKownville, Blackberry Estates**

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Guilderland Town Supervisor Ken Runion announced Monday, June 29, a plan to mitigate flooding issues in McKownville and at Blackberry Estates on the Curry Road Extension that could include bonding \$1 million.

"Stormwater issues have arisen in McKownville due to a rising water table and inadequate infrastructure," said Runion. "In Blackberry Estates, we are still working to clearly identify the source of the problem."

He said Blackberry Estates residents have resorted to filling their basements in with concrete, due to the "thousands" of gallons of water they were pumping.

Runion said he is planning to propose retaining Delaware Engineering to begin evaluating the situation in both locations. He said that the engineering work is expected to cost about \$35,000 at Blackberry Estates and \$75,000 in McKownville. That money would be taken from

a reserve fund if approved by the town board. The work would include mapping, reporting and describing the work that needs to be done to mitigate the flooding.

After the report is complete, Runion said he is planning to propose a \$1 million bond to take long-term problem solving steps.

"Total construction costs are expected to be significantly higher, and the projects will be conducted in phases," according to a written statement from the supervisor's office.

Runion said doing the project in phases would allow the town to use municipal employees rather than contractors, saving it money.

Runion said if the town bonds the project, the initial engineering funds would be reimbursed by the bond. He said he does not have exact figures regarding a bond yet, but is expecting to have them by the Tuesday, July 7, meeting.

"We're crunching those numbers now," Runion said.

Runion said the state's drainage system in McKownville is sub-par, and if the state is

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**Guilderland Town Supervisor Ken Runion**

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willing to commit to upgrades, the project could become larger, although the town would not be paying to upgrade the state's system.

Runion said a scaled-back plan focusing on areas behind Stuyvesant Plaza on Western Avenue extending to the Albany City line would likely cost less than \$5 million. That would be without any work done on the states' drainage system. It is unclear how much the project would cost if the state commits to upgrades. If the state does contribute to making upgrades to its system, making the overall project larger in size, the federal government might be more willing to give federal stimulus money to the project.

"There's a couple of different ways to approach it," Runion said.

He said by beginning work on the project, the town might be able to get the ball rolling for the state.

Runion said the town is working toward getting federal stimulus

money, but wants to move forward with the project due to safety and health issues.

"Guilderland has applied for and will continue to pursue economic stimulus funds and other grants to execute these projects," Runion said in a statement. "However, in light of the uncertainties involved in obtaining funding from this source in a highly competitive environment, we are committed to moving forward with the initial steps toward resolution using local resources to protect the public safety, health and quality of life of Guilderland's residents."

Runion said basements have caved in and sinkholes have appeared in McKownville, and "ponding" and pooling water encourage mosquitoes, which bring additional health issues.

Runion emphasized the importance of not spending the initial engineering fees and then

letting the data "sit on a shelf."

"We have to move forward with work," Runion said.

He also said the constant pumping of basements is time-consuming for emergency services.

"We do stress some of our resources because of the problems down there," Runion said.

McKownville Improvement Association President Don Reeb said "it's a wonderful thing" that the town is taking steps to deal with a problem he said has gone on since at least the 1960s.

"There are a thousand homes in McKownville and a couple hundred businesses," Reeb said.

Reeb said the construction of the New York State Thruway, University at Albany and Stuyvesant Plaza, along with other hard-top structures have contributed to the problem, and over the years, the problem has become worse.

He quipped that if the stormwater issue is resolved, he will be one step closer to enjoying "murder mysteries and crossword puzzles" in his retirement.