

A report on the functions, activities and accomplishments of
the McKownville Water Advisory Board as of May, 1965

File
5-1865

In May 1964 the McKownville Improvement Association alarmed at the badly silted in condition of the McKownville reservoir and the increased need for water, requested the Town Board to form a new Water Advisory Board for the McKownville Water District to replace the existing one whose ranks had become depleted.

The Town Board acquiesced and appointed Chas. Maneri, John Feldmann, Fred Abele, Gerald W. Hamme and J. Francis Purdy. Chas. Maneri was chosen chairman and the first meeting was held on May 15th.

It was decided that the immediate problem was to push dredging the reservoir whose storage capacity had become perilously low. The next problems to be met it was felt were to get control of the upper or Church pond owned for the most part by McKownville Methodist Church to insure its continued availability for increased storage, and an increase in the capacity of the filtration plant to enable it to process all the water available and to improve the quality of the water by reducing the overtaxing of the present plant.

The Board recommended that J. Kenneth Fraser Associates be retained to furnish the required Engineering Services and to prepare plans for the reservoir dredging and the addition to the filter plant.

Plans for the dredging were prepared, reviewed by the Advisory Board and bids were taken on Nov. 10th. The work was performed by Anrad Const. Co. and when completed this spring, the capacity of the reservoir had been increased from 1,250,000 gal. to 3,160,000 gals. at a cost of approximately \$27,000 including a new intake to replace the aged low lift pumping station. The Board then turned its eyes to the other problems to be tackled.

The plans for the enlargement of the filter capacity were undertaken by Mr. Fraser. It was found that the upper or church pond has a capacity of 7,500,000 gal. and it was recommended that the Town Supervisor take immediate steps to effect its purchase so that the Water District could repair the dam or take steps to give the Water District water rights over it.

A petition from 29 residents of the Shady Lane area was presented to be included in the water district. The Board recommended deferment of action pending establishment of increased filtration.

A complete analysis of water use during the summer of 1964 was prepared by Mr. Purdy including statistics of water over the spillway (for much of the summer a minus quantity with the drought) and provided vitally needed statistics for the use of the Board.

The Board studied a report of the New York Fire Insurance Rating Bureau on the fire defenses of the McKownville Fire District which took serious exception to the inability of the water system to meet the required fire flows.

It was also noted that during the summer of 1964 for a considerable period the water flowing into the reservoir from the two small streams which supply it was insufficient to meet the demand. When our own reservoir drew down it was necessary to siphon water from the church pond which we could only do with their permission. Without rain to augment it, the watershed seems to produce about 375,000 gpd max.

In late 1964 Mr. Maneri moved to a new job in Washington and I was elected chairman. The Town Board was notified and Mr. Harry Reynders was added to the Board.

In late December began the first of a series of events which have rendered the operation of this Water Advisory Board difficult. The Town Board proposed to change the zoning ordinance to permit high rise buildings and relax the square foot requirements. A specific proposal aimed at McKownville contemplated three high rise buildings to house up to 300 families. Members of the Water Board were alarmed at the proposed increased use of water, as Shady Lane had already been deferred and the Board had not been consulted as to possible impact. Neither had the Fire District been consulted as to possible impact on its facilities. The Water Advisory Board unanimously opposed the change in zoning. The Board was treated in a derogatory manner and its information was questioned as to accuracy.

The Advisory Board felt that an assistant should be provided for the Water Superintendent to assist him in operating the filtration plant as he now has so many duties that maintenance is lagging. The NYFIRE report had recommended similar procedure stating that such a man should be in liason with the Fire Dept. in event of serious fire. The Water Board recommended to the Town Board in 1964 that such an item be included in the budget. In 1965 the Water Board recommended the hiring of Wm. Olsmitt, a resident of McKownville, a member of McKownville Fire Dept. A man qualified to operate a filter plant as he is night operator of a much larger similar installation at Winthrop Laboratories in Rensselaer. After much prodding the board appointed a man who does not reside in the district, is not a member of the Fire Dept. No one is sure of his qualifications and this Board was never consulted or given a chance to review his qualifications. This is a bit of political chicanery.

The Town Board has effected a plan to give water to some 75 additional users in the Three Hills Terrace area. This was done on the advice of the Town Wide Water Advisory Board and this Board was given no opportunity to speak on same or examine proposals except at hearings.

During the winter the Town Board without previous notice and knowledge of this Board doubled the size of the Board, increasing its size to 10 men.

With Mr. Maneri's leaving our liason with the Town Wide Water Advisory Board was lost, Efforts to have Mr. Purdy work with the Town wide board have been met with such bad grace that such proposal has been dropped.

On the credit side of the ledger, bids have been taken on April 19th and the contract signed with Wilber & Ciarfello, Inc. in the amount of \$42,655.00 to perform the work of enlarging the filter plant. This will double its capacity from 288,000 gpd to more than 500,000 gpd. Mr. Fraser and others have estimated the capacity of the watershed to produce water under normal rainfall conditions as 500,000 gpd maximum. Thus the enlarged plant will be able to produce more than the streams can produce and will give an added safety factor, and reduce the strain on the present plant which has been severely overtaxed at times rendering the quality of the water poor.

A plan to raise the dam 2 feet to give another 1,600,000 gal. storage capacity has been temporarily at least dropped on advice of the Engineer due to its proximity to Western Avenue and the drainage

situation it might create in connection with the State Highway and the Dept. of Public Works.

In early April a survey was made through the efforts of Robert Richey, a member of the Water Advisory Board, by representatives of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to make recommendations as to improvement of the watershed, possible increased storage of water and related aspects. No report has been received as yet.

Efforts to purchase or acquire water rights to the church pond have completely stalemated. The Water Advisory Board has requested Mr. Robinson several times to investigate this and proceed with action on same. Mr. Robinson has asked that these contacts be left to him. So far no action has been taken of which we are aware after nearly one year.

The Water Board has also a number of smaller items on some of which recommendations have already been made, and a number still to be studied which it is felt will help the situation.

The dredged reservoir will now reserve approximately a ten day supply under normal summer use in excess of 300,000 gpd, not too much when you consider it. The upper reservoir could give us an additional 20 day supply. Both these figures are for raw water alone. Our storage tank will store 200,000 gal. of treated water. No one has yet come up with a satisfactory method of increasing this capacity without tremendous expense to the taxpayers.

The addition of the Three Hills Terrace area to be supplied from the McKownville Reservoir will add an additional use of approximately 15,000 gpd (Approx. 75 families @ 200 gpd) to the water use.

In my opinion any large increased use of the water facilities should be carefully weighed before being undertaken and a conservative approach used to giving our water away. Unless this done McKownville residents will find that they have spent a large sum of money for improvements which will be of no benefit at all.

Respectfully submitted

Fred B. Abele
Chairman of the Water Advisory Board
for the McKownville Water District