

# McKownville Firehouse Project To Cause Tax Hike

By BRUCE DANIELS

If the McKownville Fire District's referendum calling for the expenditure of another \$80,000 is approved by district voters next Thursday, McKownville taxpayers can expect an

increase of about \$6.88 per \$1,000 assessed valuation.

Approval would bring the bond issues okayed to \$255,000 in the fire district.

At the present 4 per cent interest rate on bonds, construction and land acquisition for the firehouse will mean an increase of \$5.65 per \$1,000 and the new pumper will cost taxpayers \$1.23 per \$1,000, according to Fire Commissioner Fred Abele.

Mr. Abele added, however, that the bond issue for the purchase of the district's 1957 LaFrance pumper will be paid off this year, which would mean a decrease of about 70 cents per \$1,000 in the tax bill.

The McKownville Board of Fire Commissioners held an open house last night to answer questions from residents on the upcoming bond issue and to explain the course of events since voters approved a \$175,-

000 bond issue in June 1965 by a 367 to 64 margin.

About 30 persons attended the meeting—including Guilderland Supervisor Carl Walters, members of the fire company and its auxiliary, but only one resident asked more than one question of the commissioners.

Frank Casatelli, chairman of the board of commissioners, said he had hoped more people would attend, but felt the combination of cold weather and

"confidence" in the commissioners may have kept people away.

"We want to keep this problem in the open," Mr. Casatelli said—referring to the district's fight to reverse a condemnation commission's award of \$102,000 for the site of the proposed new firehouse.

Mr. Casatelli added "If anyone is here tonight to complain about the price of the land, then he's among friends — because we think it's too high." He said the voters are being asked to approve the \$102,000 figure for the land because "We've got to get started now! The longer we wait, the higher construction cost are going to be."

The fight to lower the condemnation award will be continued — "to the governor, if necessary"—said Mr. Casatelli, who added that he was also "hopeful" that construction costs could be kept at a lower level than taxpayers will be asked to approve.

## Bids Withdrawn

"The last time around four out of seven contractors withdrew their bids because we were tied up in the courts, but this time we hope to get lower bids," he said.

The lowest bid received for construction exceeded the \$110,000 authorized by voters in the June 1965 referendum.

When the one resident asked if the cost of property at 1248-1250 Western Avenue would not make McKownville's "the richest firehouse in the state," Mr. Casatelli replied that 15 sites had been investigated and found

unsuitable or impossible to obtain.

"Besides," he said, "the courts wouldn't have allowed us to condemn the property if we hadn't been able to prove an absolute need for it."

Commissioner Abele noted that it was the "first time in the history of New York State" that a fire district has had to condemn property to build a new facility.

The property, which had been purchased by the Potter Club Alumni Association in 1962 for \$40,000 later was valued at \$50,000 by an appraiser on behalf of the fire district.

As for the \$102,000 award, Mr. Casatelli said last night he felt there was "nothing illegal about it, but something is wrong when the land value goes up so much in so short a time. And not a single change or improvement has been made on the site."

The land was sold by the Potter Alumni Association to Bowman Associates—later named "The 1250 Western Avenue Corp.—in July 1965 for \$67,000.