

# TOWN BOARD SCHEDULES HEARING ON WATER DISTRICT MERGER

An informational hearing on the proposed merger of the Birchmont and McKownville Water Districts has been scheduled by the Guilderland Town Board. It will take place on Monday, January 22 at 8 p.m. at Christ Lutheran Church, 1500 Western Avenue.

Nearly two years ago, on May 10, 1966, the Town Board held the first hearing on the absorption of the smaller Birchmont district into the McKownville district. At that time it was revealed that repairs and modifications to the Birchmont system had been recommended by the New York State fire insurance rating organization.

The Birchmont district was created in 1956 as an emergency measure. It is a small "hardship" district (66 households) without a commercial tax base. Residents of the area, (south of Western Avenue and east of McKown Road) are active in the McKownville Fire Department and the Western Turnpike Rescue Squad.

Birchmont buys its water from the McKownville district which controls the output of the McKownville reservoir. The reservoir's capacity for meeting McKownville's expanding needs has been questioned.

The McKownville Water Advisory Board was on the fence about the merger in May 1966 but has since

come out in favor of it along with the Town-wide Water Advisory Board and the McKownville Improvement Association. The McKownville Fire Commissioners were for the consolidation at the time of the first hearing.

When the issue was first brought up, the late J. Francis Purdy, a member of the Water Advisory Board, opposed the measure. He said the Birchmont residents wished to join the McKownville district because they believed that operating costs would be less and that McKownville would absorb improvement costs. "The taxpayers of the district never have and do not now want to extend its boundaries" Mr. Purdy said at the May 1966 hearing.

Fred Abele, a fire commissioner and chairman of the McKownville Water Advisory Board, favored the merger. He declared, also at the 1966 hearing, that the people of the McKownville district might have "a moral responsibility" to their Birchmont neighbors.

The possibility of Birchmont's joining with the Westmere Water District has also been mentioned. However, the tax rate of the Westmere district is expected to be considerably higher than the McKownville district's projected rate would be even after merging with Birchmont. (Approximately \$18 vs. approximately \$11).