

Fellow Residents of McKownville,

On May 3rd property owners who are registered voters in the McKownville Water District will be asked to decide by referendum vote whether or not the McKownville and Westmere Water Districts shall be consolidated, including debts and plant facilities.

All voters participating in the referendum should carefully weigh the facts and the pros and cons of the consolidation. The officers of the McKownville Improvement Association have presented some very misleading information. Please consider the following which I present for your enlightenment.

1. - ALL members of the McKownville Water Advisory Board voted unanimously in favor of the consolidation. All serve on a voluntary basis and are property owners in McKownville. ONE member of the Board, also an officer in the Improvement Association, turned completely about and headed opposition to the consolidation.
2. - The resulting rate of water tax to McKownville users would be a raise of 86¢ per thousand of assessed valuation based on 1977 tax figures and would probably be less based on 1978 figures. The tax to Westmere users would drop about 45¢ per thousand or less. Water rents would not be affected.
3. - The combined McKownville and Westmere assessed valuation would be \$24,724,400 (1977) as against \$4,164,600 for McKownville alone.
4. - McKownville District currently purchases water from Westmere at 80¢ per thousand gallons and resells it to users at 40¢ per thousand gallons, the balance being included in the tax rate which in 1977 was \$20,241 per thousand assessed valuation.
5. - In 1970 McKownville filtration plant could not meet the demand and make up water was purchased in that year as in 1971, 2 and 3, at 40¢ per thousand gallons, covering only operation and maint. costs of the Westmere District. In November of 1973 it became impossible to maintain water quality from the McKownville supply, and all water was purchased from Westmere from that date on.
6. - During 1976 the rate of purchase was raised from 40¢ to 80¢ per thousand gallons to reflect a more fair share of the cost of Westmere Water including some of the capital cost. This was a reasonable decision and was necessitated by a criticism from the State Auditors. It cannot be lowered except by consolidation

7. - Unless consolidation is effected we are a Water District without a supply. When last used the filtration system was inadequate. Salt content resulting from the highway network was beyond any reasonable amount as was the iron content. The turbidity of the water was unacceptable due to high runoff in the streams, and the amount and cost of chemicals used would today bankrupt us. It is just not feasible to reactivate the old plant, and would cost an estimated \$40,000 to do so anyhow.

Let us review history of the supply:

- Dec. 17, 1949 it was placed in service. McKownville Water District had been formed by petition to the Town of Guilderland. The former Witbeck reservoir was used for supply fed by two small Pine Bush streams, which unite to form the KrumKill. Two rapid sand filters had a capacity of 288,000 gallons per day.
- In 1951 Troubles began with the construction of the New York State Thruway through the watershed, badly silting the reservoir. After many years of haggling the reservoir was finally dredged in 1965 and after dredging had a capacity of 3,160,000 gallons.
- April 1955 The quality of the water color and taste wise became so bad that a Water Advisory Committee was formed to work with the Engineers. I have served on such a committee since that time.
- In 1959 Perimeter wells around the reservoir were installed to attempt to increase the supply and reduce the turbidity. These were a failure.
- In 1960 The Northway Extension was constructed through the watershed, adding another highway to our pollution problem. Construction was managed much better in this instance.
- In 1965 A Diatomaceous Earth filter was tried for the same reasons as the wells, and was a failure.
- Feb. 6, 1968 Westmere Water District began operating.
- In 1968 Washington Avenue Extension was constructed again disturbing the feeder streams and adding a third major highway for salt pollution directly into the streams.
- Jan. 1, 1969 McKownville Water District and Birchmont Water District in the Ayre Drive area were consolidated.
- Early 1970's Albany County sewer trunk was constructed along Washington Ave. disturbing further the feeder streams.
- Nov 19, 1974 Church Pond dam was breached and that 7,500,000 gallon storage reservoir was lost. This was after our plant was closed in November of 1973.

The plot of land owned by the District includes only the pond behind the filter plant with a shoreline buffer with an average 50 ft. width all around, a little longer on the upstream end. A 150 ft. power line right of way bisects the upper end of the land. The District NEVER owned any of the Watershed lands, nor the upper or Church Pond.

The Westmere water has proven of good quality. It is taken through a modern filtration plant from the Watervliet Reservoir augmented by wells with which the District started. By means of extensions this has been realized, and the consolidated districts would have the advantage of the tax base of the Northeast Industrial Park at Guilderland Center.

I too, am very parochial, and hate to see the name McKownville removed from the few things on which it still appears. However, I see no future in keeping independent a supplyless Water District, or backing ourselves into a corner for these reasons. We all may regret it.

I URGE YOU TO GET OUT AND VOTE TO CONSOLIDATE THE TWO DISTRICTS MAY 3RD.

Fred B. Abele, Chairman
MCKOWNVILLE WATER ADVISORY BOARD
a member since 1955