

Group airs ways to block mall

By TOM FRIEDMAN
Staff Writer

Members of the McKownville Improvement Association agreed Tuesday night that incorporation of their hamlet into a village might aid their fight against the proposed \$85 million Crossgates mall.

But the members disagreed on whether such a proposal would be realistic for other purposes.

"Frankly, I can't believe you're saying these things with a straight face," Karl Felsen, a Mercer Street resident and state legislative aide, told association President Donald Reeb after he detailed what incorporation might entail.

Felsen said he knew of four villages in New York that recently have legally gone out of business and has heard of a dozen others that have done the same

illegally.

Reeb said he realized finances would be difficult for the proposed village but it would probably mean an end for the Crossgates proposal.

He said the village could stop the mall by setting boundaries that would include part of the mall's site in Guilderland's Pine Bush area, just across the Thruway from the the hamlet of McKownville.

With some of the site within the village's jurisdiction, Reeb said he believes a village zoning board of appeals could change the site's classification to one that wouldn't permit a mall.

Because of the potential meaning of incorporation, the members agreed to have a committee look at long-term consequences.

The association also decided to establish a committee to investigate the

possibility of fixing up the water filtration plant adjacent to the McKownville Reservoir.

Reeb said the state Department of Environmental Conservation might rule against the mall if the reservoir is shown to be a possible source of water for the hamlet's 2,600 residents.

Consultants for mall developer Pyramid Crossgates Co. have testified at the impact hearings that runoff from the mall's parking lot would probably pollute the reservoir.

But they also have presented letters from Albany County Health Department officials saying the reservoir should no longer be considered a water source. It was abandoned in 1973 after the water from it failed to meet health standards. Association leaders contend the poor condition of the filtration plant was responsible for the water's quality.



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