

# Guilderland board okays combining water districts

By Tom Friedman

Staff Writer

The Guilderland Town Board voted 4-0 Tuesday night to consolidate the McKownville and Westmere water districts, despite requests made during a public hearing that it postpone action.

The requests were made by a group of McKownville residents who oppose building an \$85 million Crossgates shopping mall and fear consolidation would make it easier for the mall developer to have McKownville Reservoir declared unusable by state authorities.

At present, the developer is seeking permission from the state Department of Environmental Conservation to discharge pollutants into the reservoir.

Although the reservoir is classified as a water source for McKownville, the hamlet has not used the reservoir for drinking water since 1972.

The protesting residents asked the town board to make a study of the consequences of consolidation

before taking a vote.

Town Board member Virginia Horan, who said she sympathized with the residents' fear, abstained from the vote.

The request for the vote was made two months ago by the McKownville Fire Department and supported by town Water and Waste Water Superintendent Dennis Tyson.

The fire department has contended the present arrangement in which McKownville buys water from Westmere means that there is a single connection between the two districts.

Fred Abele, a fire department spokesman, said at the public hearing that the single connection has resulted in limiting flow into McKownville and has

produced what he called a "dangerous situation." He said the need for more connections has grown more severe over the years because of the number of new motels and office buildings in the hamlet.

McKownville has bought water from Westmere since 1972 when its reservoir failed to provide quality drinking water.

Tyson said he believes consolidation would produce a larger, hence wealthier, district.

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