

NY 23-80

VOTE NO ON CONSOLIDATION

Over

DON'T HELP CROSSGATES

Consolidating the water districts may be what Crossgates needs to get the State permits we have been fighting against at the Ramada Inn for the past six months.

Why?

There is one permit which is absolutely essential for Crossgates: the Freshwater Wetland Permit. They cannot build their mall without it. There is a 16 acre state-protected wetland in the middle of the Crossgates site. Crossgates must have a permit from the State to destroy that wetland. In deciding whether or not to grant that permit, the State must balance the environmental benefits of the wetland against the economic and social benefits of the Crossgates Mall.

One of the factors to be considered in weighing the environmental value of a freshwater wetland is "protection of subsurface water resources and provision for valuable watersheds and recharging ground water supplies". At the present moment, the wetland on the Crossgates site is part of a valuable watershed, because that watershed feeds the only legal source of water for the McKownville Water District, the McKownville Reservoir.

That watershed is currently protected by law. 10 NYCRR 100.17 of New York State Law consists of the regulations which protect "the springs and the spring-fed reservoir and future drainage areas tributary thereto which serve as a source of the public water supply of the McKownville Water District in the town of Guilderland..." These regulations protect the watershed "from any act ... which may result in contamination of any portion of the water supply".

Consolidation may end the force of these regulations protecting the watershed. Consolidation means that the McKownville Water District will cease to exist. When the McKownville Water District ceases to exist, then by operation of law, regulations referring to the McKownville Water District cease to be valid. That would include 100.17. Crossgates would be free to disturb the watershed and the wetland on it without concern for the protection of the watershed of the McKownville Water District, because there would be no such district.

Consolidation will diminish the value of the watershed and the State-protected wetland in the watershed. With consolidation, the McKownville Reservoir will no longer be the only legal source of water for the consolidated district, and in law may no longer be a reservoir at all. Moreover, the Reservoir's watershed is not large enough to have any practical value as a water source to the much larger consolidated district.

Consolidation therefore makes it more likely that Crossgates will get the State wetland permit which it must have to build its unwanted Mall.

Whatever long-term benefits consolidation may have to the McKownville water system, consolidation is not necessary to make the improvements the Fire Department needs. The Town Board may appropriate money at any time to improve the McKownville water system.

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But consolidation at this time may make a crucial difference in whether or not Crossgates will be built.

You and your neighbors have helped fight Crossgates in many ways, with money, time, moral support. Let us not hurt the cause now.

THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO VOTE FOR CONSOLIDATION. NOT WHILE WE HAVE THE THREAT OF CROSSGATES.

PLEASE VOTE NO.

Rhonda Childs,
President
489-7771

Mary C. Phillips,
Treasurer
438-1629

CONCERNED CITIZENS AGAINST CROSSGATES

P.O. Box 5393
Albany, N.Y. 12205

Directors

Gregory Bell
Rhonda Childs
Drew Hartzell
Anita Kershaw
Mary C. Phillips
Don Reeb

McKownville, Westmere to vote on water

By SHARON GAZIN

Knickerbocker News Reporter

GUILDERLAND — Residents of the McKownville and Westmere water districts will decide Wednesday whether the two districts will be merged, but many also may be casting votes on other issues in the town.

Voting will be from 4 to 10 p.m. Wednesday in the Westmere and McKownville fire departments.

Proponents of the water district consolidation, including members of the McKownville Fire Department, say aerial firefighting equipment cannot be used at 1450 Western Ave. or the Ramada Inn because of low water volume in the system.

They say consolidation would be more economical and is needed so improvements to the McKownville Water District can be made.

Opponents say the move may lead to reclassification of the McKownville Reservoir and remove an obstacle from construction of the proposed \$85 million Crossgates Mall in Guilderland.

Several questions have been raised by those involved in the consolidation dispute. Some key ones are:

- Could improvements be made to the McKownville Water District without consolidation with Westmere?

Town Superintendent of Water and Wastewater Management Dennis Tyson, also a member of the Westmere Fire Department, said while improvements to the McKownville Water District could be made without consolidation, they could be borne better by a larger water district's larger tax base. He advocates consolidation for that reason and to avoid keeping two sets of books.

The total appropriations last year of

the McKownville Water District were \$132,000, while Westmere's were \$800,000. Total assessed valuation in McKownville is \$4.2 million, while in Westmere, it is \$24.2 million.

- McKownville firefighters say there is only one metered connection between the two water districts, and if that connection ever breaks there is the possibility of a "fire disaster."

Tyson said the ideal answer to the problem would be a pit containing a meter and pressure-reducing valve — to measure the amount of water McKownville buys from Westmere — which would serve as a connection between the districts and be constructed near McKown Road.

Tyson estimated construction of a new pit would cost about \$20,000. That includes \$5,500 for a meter, which would not be needed if consolidation occurred.

- Are there alternate sites for the pit, or existing connections, between the districts?

John Esler, a member of the McKownville Improvement Association and a former member of the McKownville Water Advisory Board, said earlier a connection already exists on West Dillenbeck Drive.

Tyson confirmed an unused meter pit there could be used to connect the two districts, but linking the old 4-inch mains with Westmere's 8-inch ones would mean the volume of water that

could be pumped through the smaller pipes would be less.

The meter pit was constructed when the McKownville Water District sold water to Three Hills Terrace, but is unused because residents of Three Hills now buy water from Westmere.

The pit could be reactivated by placing a meter and pressure-reducing valve between the systems. Cost of the valve would be less than \$1,600, Tyson said.

- How would the McKownville Reservoir be affected by consolidation?

Proponents say consolidation would have no effect.

Opponents of consolidation, including Donald Reeb, a member of the board of directors of the McKownville Improvement Association, say it could aid Crossgates' efforts to gain permits to build in the reservoir's water shed.

William Dickerson, administrative law judge who conducted recent environmental permit hearings for the proposed mall, said since no formal agreement has been made providing for McKownville to buy water from Westmere, the reservoir remains the legal source of water for McKownville. If the districts are consolidated, the Pyramid Crossgates Co., developer of Crossgates Mall, may argue it is no longer a reservoir, he said. It would take a separate application and public hearing to change the reservoir's status as the McKownville water supply.

Vote 4-10 p.m. Wednesday.

GUILDERLAND — Residents of the McKownville and Westmere Water Districts will decide whether to consolidate the two water districts in a vote from 4 to 10 p.m. Wednesday in the Westmere and McKownville

fire halls.

An informational meeting is being sponsored by the McKownville Improvement Association at 8 p.m. Tuesday in the Tom Sawyer Motor Inn, Western Avenue.

VOTE NO

this is the key
issue

See other side