

The McKownville Improvement Association (MIA) has circulated a flyer stating that while the MIA is not taking sides on the issue of the consolidation of the McKownville and Westmere water districts, they do wish to raise "pertinent questions." Fair enough. Please bear with the length of the following discussion. The MIA will be quoted and then a response or discussion will follow.

MIA Question 1 "Threat of Imminent Danger: It has been reported that if the supply line from Westmere broke, there would be no water to fight a fire.

- * Doesn't the Water Tower on Schoolhouse Road store 200,000 gallons for just that purpose?
- * Why weren't we also told that there already is another connection to the Westmere system on West Dillenbeck Drive?"

COMMON SENSE RESPONSE:

This is really a statement and two questions. The statement is a bit simplistic and misleading. If the main supply line from Westmere broke, it would indeed be a crisis that might be manageable on a temporary basis depending on the time of day and how much immediate conservation could be initiated. However, the immediate concern of the McKownville Fire Department was twofold and had nothing to do with such a break. Their concerns did not involve the main line coming from Westmere to McKownville, but rather a break in the main line after the meter at Schoolhouse Road or after the Tower. (Remember the Tower, although it creates pressure, is just part of the line subject to being cut off by a break just as any other part of the line.) But most important of all, there isn't enough water right now to operate the ladder truck in the eastern end of McKownville. We are talking about right now, without any breaks.

The second question concerning the connection on West Dillenbeck Drive is an example, as is the first question, of how a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. There is indeed an old connection at West Dillenbeck Drive dating from the days when McKownville sold water to Three Hills Terrace. It was not kept a secret from anyone. There are only three things wrong (one minor, two major) with using this connection. Number one, there is a much higher pressure in the Westmere line. This would necessitate the installation of a pressure reducing valve costing \$600 to \$800 (admittedly a small expense). Number two, and most important, this connection, even with such a valve, would require manual activation by a member of the water department. A fire is an emergency. It can't wait for the water department employee on call to be notified, for him to get to the fire scene, for him to locate the valve (which could be especially difficult under winter snows), and for him to activate the connection. Number three, to do away with manual activation and to allow Westmere

the ability to charge McKownville for the use of the water, a pressure reducing valve and meter would have to be installed at the approximate cost of \$3,000. However, even with this expenditure and additional connection, the primary need to supply significantly greater water volume would be met to a much greater degree by a connection on McKown Road. If we decide not to consolidate, we might better spend the additional dollars (approximately \$12,000) to put the connection where it will do us the most good.

This first MIA question raises a serious counter-question. Why weren't the experts consulted and/or heeded concerning this question? Is there some reason not to trust the fire department that knows about water and fighting fires? Is water department superintendent Denny Tyson incompetent or not to be trusted? Who composed the misleading statement getting the whole issue wrong, and then asked one question showing a total lack of the most basic knowledge of a water system and another question that by innuendo "Why weren't we told..." implies a deep, dark conspiracy?

MIA Question 2 "Regarding Crossgates: The McKownville Reservoir's status has been instrumental in the fight against Crossgates. Several memos to Supervisor Walters (from Crossgates) in 1978 clearly indicate Crossgates' intention to destroy the McKownville Reservoir so that their development can proceed. The McKownville Improvement Association, the Concerned Citizens Against Crossgates, and many others have prevented this up to now.

- * Why does the Town continue to act in ways that assist Crossgates?
- * Will the Reservoir site be changed to a park and pond as Crossgates has requested?"

COMMON SENSE RESPONSE:

This once again is a statement and two very strange questions. The first question about the Town and Crossgates - what is it supposed to mean and what does it have to do with water consolidation? Is this just more innuendo and finger-pointing or is there a point to the question? If the question has a point, put it in writing and explain it in detail so it can be addressed.

The officers of the MIA must know that (1) consolidation would not affect the quality or classification of the water (2) that according to the Environmental Conservation Law any person or corporation can file for a change in classification of a body of water at any time and no one can prevent the filing of such a request, (3) that the Water Advisory Board's original suggestion that the water districts be merged was presented over a year before the 1978 memo alluded to and thus demonstrates coincidence rather than conspiracy.

The second question asks if a park will be built. Who knows? Perhaps the MIA has a seer or crystal ball and they know whether Crossgates will be approved, or independent of Crossgates, what might happen to the reservoir site, but no one else can foresee the future. The Town Board indicated their opposition to reclassification. The fire department has gone on record as opposing reclassification, and the MIA opposes reclassification, but that doesn't mean it can't happen even if it remains in a separate McKownville Water District. As a bit of related information, it is apparently legally possible to create a recreation area out of the reservoir and still keep it classified A. This could possibly be the best of two worlds, and perhaps the MIA legal counsel should look into this as a possibility to aid their fight.

MIA Question 3 "Regarding Water Pressure: There may be less pressure than is desirable to fight fires at the Ramada Inn and at the 1450 Western Avenue Office Building.

- * What are the various solutions to increase their pressure?
- * These buildings are 10 years old. Why wasn't this problem made public before?
- * Who should pay for the costs involved?

COMMON SENSE RESPONSE:

This question once again demonstrates the "little knowledge--dangerous thing" syndrome. Water pressure does not present a problem as suggested. The problem is water volume. In fighting fires, normally the hydrants supply the volume, the pumpers supply the pressure.

The various solutions to increased water volume have been enumerated in detail in the first COMMON SENSE flyer.

The question about the problem being "made public" is another example of innuendo and finger-pointing. In April of 1980, the first joint drill using water was held between the McKownville and Westmere Fire Departments employing Westmere's new ladder truck. The water volume was not sufficient to make the truck effective. Three of the first people apprised of this situation were the then president of the McKownville Improvement Association and two members of the MIA Board. The firemen did this because in 1977, the MIA had opposed consolidation on economic grounds. Because the economic conditions had changes (and consolidation would result in lower costs to McKownville users) and because the serious firematic problem was just made evident, the firemen now wanted the assistance of the MIA.

Given this information, a number of counter-questions become evident. Why was this question even asked? Who wrote it, why was it written in the finger-pointing tone, and for what purpose? Why wasn't the membership of the MIA told of and given the details of the President's meeting with the firemen in April?

Cost involved in capital improvements to a water system should be borne the way the cost of all other general capital improvements are distributed proportionately through the tax base.

MIA Question 4 "Value of Water District Property: The water mains, water tower, Reservoir and District lands have been installed by the McKownville Water District. There is a relatively small debt remaining in the District. Crossgates has offered about \$400,000 for making the Reservoir a park.

- * What is the value of the assets of the McKownville Water District?
- * What indebtedness will be assumed with a consolidation?

COMMON SENSE RESPONSE:

This indeed is a very interesting statement and first question, but it has to be translated. Let's say the value of the Water District's assets is the \$400,000 mentioned. How would this value change with a consolidated district? It would still be worth the exact same amount. What this question may really be hinting at is that those who favor the incorporation of McKownville into a village, fear that consolidation may reduce this proposed, future village's assets (and thus its bonding power) by \$400,000. If this is the underlying concern, come out and state it in plain language. Are we really talking about the merits of water consolidation here or the merits of village incorporation? Also, since MIA has access to excellent legal counsel, and since they may be pushing for a village, they should first look into the effect the forming of a village would or could have on an already accomplished consolidation.

Concerning indebtedness, the consolidated district would assume the consolidated debts and the McKownville District does have a relatively small debt. But to be considered is what the two districts have in the future as far as replacement costs. Over a period of a number of years, pipes and hydrants will have to be replaced in McKownville. The Guilderland Treatment Plant needs expansion. Under consolidation, both areas will share the burden, thus reducing the costs on the individual. The entire Town of Guilderland needs to be consolidated in one water district.

Perhaps the most "pertinent" questions the MIA flyer raises are not the ones in print but: Why was it written in a finger-pointing tone? Why did it contain misleading statements and demonstrate a poverty of the most basic knowledge concerning firefighting and water systems? Why weren't the experts in these areas consulted? Why did the MIA flyer pretend that the MIA was neutral in the water consolidation issue and merely asking questions in the "public

interest?" The questions were obviously slanted. In addition, several members of the MIA Board publicly spoke against consolidation at the July 8 Town Board meeting. MIA President Mel Behn was the only one to take a completely neutral position.

COMMON SENSE doesn't pretend to be neutral. We have looked into the issue and we are for consolidation of the McKownville and Westmere Water Districts. After our research, we trust the judgment of the firemen and the Water Department Superintendent. We find no evidence of conspiracies or plots. We find a deep concern on the part of the fire department over firematics, and a great desire on the part of the Water Department Superintendent to do the best job possible. We think consolidation is in the best interest of the individual homeowner and the common interest of the hamlet. We invite questions, comments and even criticism.

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This fact sheet was prepared and printed by COMMON SENSE, a non-political, rather loosely organized, group of McKownville residents interested in examining community concerns in a cool, objective manner. We have no dues, no by-laws, no officers, and no axes to grind.

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VOTE YES ON WATER CONSOLIDATION

August 27

4 - 10 P.M.

McKownville Fire House