

LOCAL/STATE

McKownville group battles reservoir silt

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GUILDERLAND — The McKownville Improvement Association, which has had several bitter battles over construction of the Crossgates Mall, is mounting still another.

This time the association is fighting for the cleanup of the old McKownville Reservoir, which it claims is silted because of the mall.

Association President Jim Lane said the group recently sent a letter to the state Department of Environmental Conservation (EnCon), asking that the western portion of the reservoir, situated near Stuyvesant Plaza off Western Avenue, be dredged.

Lane said the organization feared the reservoir, no longer used as a public water source, would become marsh land and be of no use to the community.

The reservoir is used by the community for ice-skating in the winter and Lane said the association would like to see it used as a lake in the summer.

"There is a large sand bar there now that wasn't there before Crossgates was built," Lane said.

Irwin King, regional director of EnCon, said he would check with the state Department of Transportation

(DOT) and the mall developer, Pyramid Crossgates Co., to determine what might be causing the siltation:

King said there was "a substantial amount of silt" brought down from a stream that empties into the reservoir, but it was difficult to identify the origin of the silt.

During the construction of Crossgates Mall, King said, the developer was required to obtain EnCon permits to prevent the erosion of sand into the stream.

Among the measures taken were the placement of straw in the stream and a siltation basin or stilling pond situated near the Northway, King said.

He said upon inspecting the site during construction and immediately after, the stilling pond appeared to be "working quite well."

He said EnCon would check with Crossgates officials to see whether they had observed any excess erosion. He also said he would re-examine the stilling pond and would check with DOT to see whether it had detailed information on the history of the reservoir.

Officials of the Crossgates Mall were not immediately available for comment.