

Draft of a letter to Supervisor Ken Runion concerning the pump house and the pond

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The McKownville pond at Stuyvesant Plaza and the building being used by the Guilderland Chamber of Commerce are unique and valuable assets. They have been the public's property for more than a few decades. The pond probably was used as a public water source since before the founding of the Town in the beginning of the 19th century. While they were part of the McKownville Water District, they are now part of the Town of Guilderland Water District though the change did not lessen their affection for these public properties. The preservation and enhancement of these properties was clearly expressed by the residents in our recent "Needs Survey" where nearly every person and household indicated that they wished to see the pond to be used as a park.

Concerning the building, the present user, the Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, has improved the building though has not been paying rent. This was not entirely unfair since much work needed to be done to convert the pump house into an office building. However, after 20 years or more of use more than partial rehabilitation for the building is called for.

Continuation of the lease might well require that the remainder of the building be rehabilitated as well as rent payments be made. Since enhancement of the pond and its accompanying land is being actively discussed by the Association, a shorter term lease would better serve a future, and as yet unknown, community purpose.

As for the pond, there is no doubt that Stuyvesant Plaza has much benefited from use of the property, and without charge, until recently. The very entrance to the Plaza from Western Avenue appears to be on pond property and without payment to the Town (or to the previous owner, the McKownville Water District). Any transfer or exchange or lease or sale of land to the Plaza should not go forward until the public has had ample opportunity to study its implications for conversion of the site to that of a public park. It may well be that every portion of the land and the pond will be needed to make the

pond into the public park that is desired.

Some confusion has been created by focusing the discussion of the pond and the building on two related but separable issues--the flooding of Western Avenue and the capacity and condition and location of the storm sewers in McKownville. Neither of these are trivial problems nor are they unrelated to the pond and the building use. The storm sewer problem will be solved, if at all, by many small changes over a period of many years. The pond cannot be destroyed as a potential park for the uncertain solution concerning the storm sewers. As for the flooding, it would seem that the larger the pond the less the potential for flooding and therefore the 8 acres or so are entirely needed by the citizens for the park and the pond. Stuyvesant has not been required to build a retention pond to help control the flooding. The design of the retention ponds at Crossgates appears to have been filled with consequences for the public that Pyramid/Crossgates is being permitted to ignore.

In short, the pond is important to McKownville as the basis for a park. This means that the public park use is not to be sacrificed to aid either Stuyvesant or Crossgates. Their interests are no more important than those of McKownville residents. The two shopping centers are at least part of the problem. They cannot use our pond and preclude us from having our park because they find it costly to create a different solution.