

aws ire of selectmen

But the Selectmen appeared to want none of Allaire's advice. Selectman John F. Gauger, Jr. made an unsuccessful motion to have Allaire's files released to the town.

The board's anger largely focused on Allaire's legal fees, despite protestations from Mayor William H. McCabe that, while he recognized Allaire's pricetag was high, the Bristol attorney had, after all, been defending the town.

"He had to accrue legal fees," McCabe said. "He was simply defending us."

Several angry exchanges with a member of the public finally led to a session of fingerpointing, with most of the ire reserved for Allaire and Riiska.

"You want fingerprinting?" Miller demanded. "I'll put the blame on the town clerk for failing to certify the petition."

As the selectmen fought their own battle inside the courtroom, an entirely different battle was fought outside in the

hallway, as LaVoie blasted the high court's decision, saying that the issues brought up by the suit had yet to be resolved.

"The issues are far from resolved," LaVoie said. "What's underlying is who has the authority to change budget appropriations. The town meeting approves it, not the selectmen. That's what the charter says."

A second issue brought up by the suit, LaVoie said, was the town clerk's duties in accepting a petition. The town's charter, she said, defines the clerk's duties as "strictly clerical."

The charter requires the town clerk to certify a petition within 15 days of receiving it provided he determines that all the signatures on it are valid. Riiska has consistently said he treated the 1991 petition as he has all others.

LaVoie has said there are "several ways" the matter of Riiska's failure to certify the petition can be acted on in the future.