

Dove defends his proposals

Seeks wider powers for manager

By JUNE PETERSON
Register Citizen Staff

WINSTED — Town Manager Wayne W. Dove yesterday defended his recommendations to the Charter Revision Commission, a day after the panel rejected nearly all his proposals.

When the commission reviewed Dove's recommendations Thursday it was appalled by his suggestions, and at points laughed at the proposals, which included allowing the town manager to intervene in any board or commission and giving him complete control over cutting line items in the budget.

Dove was asked to write down his charter change recommendations by panel Chairman Marie Kamens. He decided to draft a list even though he could not attend Thursday's public hearing. Dove attended Weicker's inaugural ball in Torrington.

He rejected the commission's claim that his recommendations were a "power play."

"If you have a captain, give the captain some authority when he thinks he should do something," Dove said.

The charter revision process must first go before the Board of Selectmen, and eventually voted on by townspeople.

"You have the power to throw out every one of them," Dove said.

Mayor James A. Pettit said yesterday he was dismayed by some of Dove's recommendations, although he had not thoroughly reviewed the proposals.

"I am concerned about the tenor of some of his suggestions," Pettit said. "It seemed he wanted to put more power into the town manager's position." The charter is set up with a series of checks and balances to discourage such a lopsided power structure, Pettit said.

Community lawyer Charlene LaVoie was upset over the commission's attitude toward Dove's suggestions, and sees it as a larger issue. "A commission should not behave in this manner," LaVoie said.

The proposals mostly stem from Dove's experience as town manager. For instance, one proposal would allow the town manager to live within a "reasonable" distance to Winsted. A town manager's salary could be reduced if he could maintain his current residence, Dove said. Currently, the manager must live in Winsted, according to the charter. Dove, a Colebrook resident, is looking for a home in Winsted.

A proposal that the town manager be able to intervene in any board and commission if it is in the best interest of the taxpayers also was born from experience. After badgering the Water Pollution Control Authority, Dove was able to persuade the panel to agree to town ownership of pumps and laterals for the Highland Lake sewer project. The move saved the town money, Dove noted. "That I'm going to go in and overturn a zoning ruling... that's absurd," Dove said.

He also said he does not want to control the press' access to town officials, but wants to make sure the right information is given out. Dove proposed to the charter panel that he be given sole responsibility for dealing with the press, unless he delegated it to someone else. "It doesn't mean that every time a reporter walks into town hall they have to knock on the town manager's door and say 'pretty please,'" he said.

Dove also recommended that he coordinate planning for the town budget, future economic development and land use. That would not usurp the power of the panels dealing with those items, Dove said. Rather, Dove would try to coordinate planning for the future, such as putting in place money for a water filtration plant. "Planning has got to be coordinated when it involves capital," he said.

Dove also defended a proposal that the town manager, and not the Board of Selectmen have authority to cut line items in the budget. "That's the way corporations work," Dove said.