

Winsted

# Selectmen reject referendum over Dove

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WINSTED — Selectmen lost what was probably their last chance to avoid a court battle Monday night when they voted against bringing the future of fired town manager Wayne Dove to a townwide vote.

The board voted 3-3 on a motion by Democratic Selectman Brian W. Sullivan to have a referendum on the selectmen's Nov. 18 decision to fire Dove. Sullivan, who opposed the firing, made the motion after the board accepted a petition signed by 301 voters asking for the referendum.

But Democratic Selectman James A. Pettit and Republican Mayor William H. McCabe said they did not think the board should schedule a referendum while the matter is in court.

The request for a referendum is

the topic of a hearing scheduled for Wednesday in Superior Court in Litchfield.

The issue was put before the court Dec. 4 when Community Lawyer Charlene LaVoie requested, and was granted, a restraining order preventing selectmen from making Dove's dismissal permanent until the referendum question is settled.

"If we vote to have this referendum, the court suit will be null and void," Sullivan said. "We don't need a court to tell us the people have a right to vote on this issue."

Pettit argued that selectmen should wait for the court to interpret whether a referendum can be held on Dove. The charter states that referendums cannot be held on the dismissal of town employees, but the petition asks for a referendum on the selectmen's vote stating their intention to fire Dove.

The charter also says that a referendum shall be scheduled if more than 291 voters request it.

Also at their meeting Monday night, selectmen began discussing the town budget. Democratic Selectman John F. Gauger Jr. said that selectmen should begin finding out from townspeople what they want to see town money spent on and what they will tolerate for a tax increase.

Gauger made a few suggestions for keeping town expenses down, including using two-man shifts in the police department instead of three-man shifts.

Because the department is small, Gaugers said using three officers and one supervisor every shift requires some officers to work extra shifts and get paid overtime.

"I'm not saying it's good or bad. I'm just throwing it out for discussion," Gauger said. "What I'm hear-

ing from people is that the recession's tough, the economy's bad, and they don't want more taxes."

Selectmen voted to have Finance Director Henry Centrella discuss preliminary budget figures at their next meeting Jan. 2.

In other business, selectmen voted to endorse a plan by a group of residents to build a Korean War Monument, probably in the west end of town, and donate it to the town.