

THE WINSTED VOICE

EXCLUSIVE

Citizens Expect the Board of Selectmen to Adhere to the Charter

By Charlene LaVoie

The April 2, 1993 edition of the Litchfield County Times asks people to judge for themselves whether the Board of Selectmen followed the correct procedure in transferring \$100,000.00 within the water budget to spend on pilot studies for a water filtration plant.

The article reports that Selectman McCabe believes that the Board acted properly and further states that Mr. McCabe considers the questioning of the transfer as "using the Charter for political purposes."

Section 1403 of the Charter states that

Board, acting as the Water Commissioners, may at the close of each fiscal year, transfer any surplus monies from the operation of the Water Division to a reserve fund for the improvement, improvement or extension of the system.

This part of Section 1403 clearly and simply provides a method of accounting for and expending surplus funds. We cannot know what surplus exists, if any, until the end of the fiscal year. Therefore, no transfer is permitted without the water budget until the end of the fiscal year.

The \$100,000.00 transfer violated Section 1403 of the Charter. If the Board had taken this action at the close of the fiscal year there would be no charter violation.

Mr. McCabe's statement that he is sure the procedure was correct and that, "This is the way we have always done it," is without merit because the Charter stipulates the manner in which the Board may act to transfer the money and without meaning because his statement is arbitrary; doing something improperly over and over does not make it proper.

Finally, Selectman Gauger correctly spotted this Charter violation and did a service to taxpayers by making it public. Mr. McCabe's political rhetoric attempts to cloud a clear intent of the Charter and deflects accurate criticism directed at him.

The good news? Citizens, increasingly familiar with their Charter, now question the Board and hold it accountable to the procedures and standards set. The days of "that's the way it has always been done" are numbered.