FOI complaint against town withdrawn

By JUNE PETERSON 9-13-91
Register Citizen Staff

WINSTED — A Freedom of Information complaint against the town was withdrawn yesterday after the town formally apologized to the complainant.

In a letter dated Wednesday, Town Attorney Mark J. Svonkin wrote to resident Francesca Gaumont apologizing that the "documentation you requested was not furnished promptly." A hearing had been scheduled for yesterday but was cancelled after the complaint was withdrawn.

Gaumont had requested information in April about the costs of a meeting between Town Manager Wayne W. Dove and the police union. Gaumont contacted community lawyer Charlene LaVoie for assistance and LaVoie requested the information May 3.

She was assured by Dove May 10 that the documents would be available to Gaumont May 13. On May 16, when Dove did not supply the documents, LaVoie wrote to the state FOI Commission about the matter.

Gaumont finally received the information Aug. 3, LaVoie said.

LaVoie was pleased that the issue was settled.

"Now we have an acknowledgment there was a problem with the process," she said.

Town attorney apologizes to woman for delay in providing information

By JOSEPH A. O'BRIEN
Courant Staff Writer

9/13/91

WINSTED — Town Attorney Mark J. Svonkin has apologized to a former Winsted police dispatcher for the town's failure to respond promptly to a freedom-of-information request the dispatcher filed in her attempt to learn the cost of a special meeting in April.

"On behalf of the town, I apologize that the documentation you requested was not furnished promptly," Svonkin said in a letter Wednesday to Francesca Gaumont.

"However, we do appreciate the fact that the town and you were ultimately able to resolve this matter through the assistance of the community lawyer," the letter said.

Charlene LaVoie, the town's community lawyer — hired by the Shafeek Nader Trust to be an advocate for residents — represented Gaumont in her complaint to the state Freedom of Information Commission in May.

Gaumont was seeking information about an April 23 meeting of police officers. She requested information on April 26 and received the information she wanted on Aug. 2.

A Freedom of Information Commission hearing on her complaint scheduled for Thursday was canceled when the complaint was withdrawn.

LaVoie said the complaint had been continued even after Gaumont obtained the information in early August because "we wanted acknowledgement that the documents were not provided promptly, and we got it."

Gaumont retired three years ago after 12 years as a police dispatcher.

She had asked for the cost of a meeting of officers called by Town Manager Wayne W. Dove April 23 to discuss possible police union concessions to reduce police budget costs.

LaVoie wrote to the state commission May 16 and said Dove had assured her "relevant documents were being gathered and would be made available" to Gaumont on May 13, but had not been received when the letter was written.

Gaumont said Thursday night the information she received shows the meeting "cost the town over $1,000."

"It could have been done with a memo," she said of the meeting. "The taxpayers would have loved to know in May what the meeting cost."