

"The whole thing is an abandonment," commented Charlene LaVoie, the community lawyer hired by a private trust to protect the interests of citizens. In response to last week's actions by the Board of Selectmen, a group calling themselves The Citizens' Coalition for Open Government has formed, and the group's first rally on Sunday attracted about 130 residents, according to Ms. LaVoie.

The group's focus, Ms. LaVoie, is "access to information. We're not dealing with just the town manager's employment issue," said Ms. LaVoie. Also at issue, she noted, is Mayor McCabe's recent public statement that only

the Mayor can set the agenda for selectmen's meetings. She claimed this procedure could deny the public or press the opportunity to become informed about town business.

She said her group also objects to the handling of Mr. Dove's job termination, particularly because the four members who voted to go ahead with firing the town manager refused to reveal adequate reasons backing their positions.

"I say let [selectmen] tell 2,000 petitioning residents that they're going to ignore public opinion," said Ms. LaVoie, referring to the petition drive being sponsored by CCOG. "It's a wild mess here."