Dove defends job to public, board

(Continued from page 1)

received a standing ovation and proceeded to give a 45-minute account of his accomplishments during his tenure, which started on Dec. 17, 1990.

"If I blew it on major issues I deserve to get fired," he said. "If performance is an issue because major policies of the board have not been implemented I deserve to get fired but I have not heard them."

Dove concluded his speech to a second standing ovation. His words set a theme that were echoed by the majority of speakers who kept prodding the selectmen for a reason why they had fired the town manager.

The resolution to fire Dove adopted by the selectmen states that the majority of the board had lost faith in his ability to communicate and administer the business of the board.

But the crowd was hungry for specifics and in their absence many were frustrated.

"Let's face it, there were deals made and everyone (of the four selectmen) seems to be gaining here and we are losing a good man," Norman Newfield, a town resident, said.

The abrupt nature of the selectmen's move to fire Dove led others last night to question whether the firing of the town manager was premeditated, dating back to deals made even before the election.

"We voted on Nov. 5 confident in the knowledge that there was no issue with the town manager," former-Selectman David A. Cappabianca said. "We have been betrayed."

Many told the selectmen that it was not too late, that they could change their votes today and they would be forgiven.

Another former selectman, Barbara Jones, told the selectmen of her own experience in changing a vote and the understanding response she received.

"I know that political strings can be pulled until they hurt and I ask you to put all that aside and look at the practical issues," she said. "We will forgive you and we will go forward, I truly believe that in these chests beat the hearts of good people."

Despite being adamant, most people who stepped to the microphone were cordial toward the selectmen they disagreed with. The tone last night was conciliatory compared to the hostile reaction the board received on Nov. 18 when the original vote took place.

During the meeting, the board sat in front of the crowd. Nancy P. Habbal, Francis J. O'Neill Jr., James A. Pettit and Mayor William H. McCabe, the four who voted to fire Dove, watched intently as the audience took turns expressing their disappointment.