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Question of referendum on town manager continued

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LITCHFIELD — The question of whether townspeople can vote on the future of suspended Town Manager Wayne W. Dove won't be answered until at least next Wednesday.

A court complaint asking for a referendum on Dove was filed last week and scheduled to be heard Monday, but Judge Anne C. Dranginis continued the matter until Dec. 18 at the request of Town Attorney Mark J. Svankin.

Svankin said he needed the time to prepare the town's defense. Community lawyer Charlene LaVoie, who filed the complaint on behalf of two residents, said she was prepared to argue the issue Monday.

In writing the complaint, LaVoie said that section 305 of the town charter guarantees residents' right to hold a referendum on selectmen's decisions. The charter says that voters can't challenge a vote to remove a town employee, but Dove hasn't been formally removed. Selectmen voted 4-3 on Nov. 18 to state their intention to fire Dove, and that's the vote the court action is challenging.

More that 1,600 residents have signed petitions asking for Dove to be reinstated.

Dranginis left in effect a temporary injunction preventing selectmen from finalizing Dove's firing until the court action is settled. LaVoie and Democratic Selectman Brian W. Sullivan, who was at the hearing in Superior Court in Litchfield, said they hope selectmen will abide by the town charter and hold a referendum before they are forced to by the court.

Republican Mayor William H. McClane said Monday that Town Clerk William T. Riiska will remain acting town manager at least until the court matter is settled. He added that he did not expect selectmen to take any action on Dove until the court has decided.