Jury still out on town manager

By JEDD GOULD
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WINSTED — It has been almost a month since Town Manager Wayne W. Dove was fired. Depending on whom you ask, the town is either operating well in his absence or floundering hopelessly.

"Things are going fine," Mayor William H. McCabe said Thursday.

"It is scary because it probably suggests we don't need a Board of Selectmen or a town manager," he said sarcastically.

But other selectmen characterize the town as a rudderless ship out of control.

"Things are falling through the cracks, folks," Brian W. Sullivan said yesterday. "I think that the degree of achievement we acheive as a town is a direct result of the town manager.

"Are we going to continue to exist? Probably," he said. "Are we going to prosper and grow, most definitely not."

While McCabe is confident with the current situation and Sullivan is angered by it, acting Town Manager William T. Riiska, is just trying to survive it. He is also the town clerk.

A permanent interim town manager has not yet been named.

"I will do the job as long as the mayor asks me to," Riiska said. Originally that was for two weeks but as the debate and controversy over the Board of Selectmen's vote of intention to fire the town manager went on, the time has been extended.

Riiska said he is trying his best to take care of things in both the town clerk's office and the town manager's office, but it is difficult.

"Both jobs are suffering," he said.

McCabe said the board is not likely to take any further action on the town manager until a resolution has been reached on the lawsuit that was filed against the town.

The lawsuit, filed by Charlene LaVoie, community lawyer, on behalf of residents Ruth Wheeler and Audrey Kelsey, asks that a referendum be held on selectmen's intention to fire Dove.