Winsted selectmen vote to delay job evaulation for town manager

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WINSTED — The Board of Selectmen last night tabled the six-month evaluation of Town Manager David A. Maynard at his request.

Maynard told the board he wanted the input of the entire board, and only four members were present last night. Mayor William H. McCabe was at the meeting initially, but left early. McCabe was on crutches, as he had broken his ankle over the weekend.

Selectmen Francis J. O'Neill and Brian W. Sullivan were absent from last night's meeting.

Maynard said he preferred to put the evaluation on hold until the Jan. 19 meeting. Maynard's evaluation was to be discussed in closed session.

Selectmen were also going to decide last night whether to sign Maynard's proposed letter of understanding, which several townspeople have objected to, saying the town charter outlines the manager's job, and that is adequate.

Community lawyer Charlene LaVoie told the board residents object to the duplication of Maynard's contract and the job guidelines already covered in the charter. Also, citizens are concerned over "additional provisions not called for by the charter," she said.

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The contract, an 11-page agreement, has been pared down to mirror similar one page agreements former town mangers David Battistoni and Jay Gsell had. A copy of the latest agreement was not available to the public last night.

In other business, Maynard told the board the cost of the proposed reconstruction of roads around Highland Lake may drop from an estimated $3.6 million to as low as $2.5 million, primarily due to reclassifying the road from urban to rural. The rural designation indicates a smaller road. Residents will discuss the road project and about $16 million in other proposed capital improvements at a Jan. 23 town meeting, voting on them at a Jan. 29 referendum.

Maynard also provided select men with projected water rate increases due to the proposed $7.5 million water filtration plant. The plant is also on the Jan. 29 ballot.

With a possible 80 percent federal grant, water rates for a homeowner currently paying $400 annually would increase to about $540, Maynard said. If the town only receives 30 percent grants, the fees would increase to $700 annually, he said.

Selectman John F. Gauger said that in addition to the up-front fees, taxpayers would also have to foot the bill for operating costs and electricity, which would result in as much as a 28 percent increase in annual user fees.