

Maynard Meets Weicker in Town And Offers Selectmen Good News

By ALISTAIR HUGHES

WINSTED—Town Manager David A. Maynard stole the show during Monday's meeting of the Board of Selectmen, unveiling a plan to get 100 percent financing to reconstruct the road around Highland Lake.

Earlier this year, a proposal seeking bond money to redo the road, which is riddled with cracks, potholes and other hazards, was defeated in a referendum, along with a bonding proposal for a water filtration plant.

But Mr. Maynard told the board he spent 15 minutes with Gov. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. during a chance meeting at Monaco's restaurant on Main Street recently. That conversation led him to believe an immediate application would net \$2 million in state and federal funds to fix the road. Mr. Maynard asked the board to vote on a resolution to seek the money.

"It has to be clear that this is something that the town and the board wants," Mr. Maynard said.

"I'll support a motion for 100 percent financing," Selectman Brian W. Sullivan said with a laugh. The motion carried unanimously.

Also this week, the board learned that the town has been awarded a 100 percent grant from the state Department of

Transportation for the design and installation of new traffic signals for the entirety of Main Street, extending to Ames Plaza. Mr. Maynard explained that a computer controlled, traffic-actuated system would be set in place to regulate traffic flow through the day. The cost of the project, to be completed within two years, is about \$680,000.

In another matter, some board members complained about legal costs in connection with a lawsuit against the town. The suit, filed in 1991 by resident Patricia Mills and community lawyer Charlene LaVoie, was dismissed two weeks ago. Litchfield Superior Court Judge Walter M. Pickett granted the request of the town's attorney, Steven Allaire, for a summary judgment. The suit took issue with the board's decision to grant a \$10,000 retirement payment to former police captain and current Selectman Francis J. O'Neill.

The attorney's fees for the case are more than \$15,000. Some selectmen accused Mr. Allaire of charging too much and stalling the case to make more money.

"We got ripped off," said Selectman Walter D. Miller. "It took him two years to get the thing dismissed on a technicality?"

The judge dismissed the case because a 360-name petition against the payment had not been certified by the town clerk. "If [Mr. Allaire] knew two years ago that this petition was never certified, then that was the time to take action," Mr. Miller continued.

Selectman Brian W. Sullivan proposed a motion requesting the attorney appear before the board to explain why the case took so long.

Mayor William H. McCabe, meanwhile, blamed the delay on Ms. LaVoie, whom he accused of suing the town for political reasons. "It's up to the party filing a suit to make a case and pursue it and agree on a stipulation of facts," he said. "We can only react to what they are doing." Mr. McCabe moved that Ms. Mills be requested to repay the town for the costs it incurred, but the motion failed.

Selectman John F. Ganger Jr. proposed a motion to have Mr. Allaire's files on the case turned over to the town and to cease payments to the lawyer. That motion, too, failed.

Mr. Miller blamed town clerk William B. Riiska. The petition brought to Mr. Riiska, calling for a town meeting on the payment in question, was not certified after Mr. Riiska consulted the town attorney. Mr. Miller agrees with Ms. LaVoie that there should have been a town meeting on the O'Neill payment. "I am pointing fingers," said Mr. Miller, pointing at Mr. Riiska. "If the town clerk had done what he was supposed to, this never would have happened."