Incumbent selectmen ripped by Winsted GOP

By JOHN L. MICEK 10/23/93
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WINSTED — Town Republicans last night had harsh words for three sitting members of the Board of Selectmen.

At a press conference at their headquarters on Elm Street, GOP Chairman Gene Gouthier blasted selectmen Walter D. Miller, Brian W. Sullivan, and John F. Gauger for playing fast and loose with the town's charter.

In a four-page written statement, Gouthier and the entire Republican selectman slate accused the three board members of attempting to violate the charter in their efforts to bar Fire Marshal William Eichner from conducting building inspections.

"Selectmen John Gauger, Brian Sullivan and Walter Miller at the Oct. 18 meeting . . . made a motion and voted in favor of a motion which violated charter section 511," Gouthier wrote.

Section 511 of the charter specifically forbids the entire board or any member of the board from publicly or privately giving orders to a subordinate of the town manager, he said.

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According to Gouthier, the three's tactics are just business as usual.

"I think they have no regard for the charter. They only use it where it suits their needs," he said.

The Monday vote, he said, was the second attempt by Miller to bar Eichner from doing building inspections. In April of 1992, he said, Miller made a similar attempt.

The board subsequently deadlocked on the Eichner vote, and the matter remains unresolved.

Sullivan, also separately raised Republican ire for his perceived interference during the promotion proceedings of Winsted police Sgt. John Hamzy.

Sullivan, Gouthier alleged, attempted to have an individual reinstated after his contract went into arbitration. That, he said, is also forbidden by section 511 of the charter.

"Section 511 also states that the Board of Selectmen shall not dictate or interfere with the Manager's appointment of any person to office or employment," the statement said.

Finally, Selectman John F. Gauger erred, Gouthier said, when he volunteered to give a deposition to Community Lawyer Charlene LaVoie without the presence of the town attorney during the recently resolved Mills Vs. Pettit case.

"I understand that Charlene will be getting a reprimand from the Connecticut Bar Association," Gouthier said. "She's an accessory to violating the charter."

Gauger, he added "disregarded his fiduciary responsibility to the Town in favor of his own agenda."

Gauger declined to comment, and Sullivan couldn't be reached for comment, but Miller said he did not see how he had violated the charter by ordering Eichner to devote 100 percent of his time to inspections.

"When the fire marshal is having trouble doing inspections, I felt it was proper to get involved. I don't see a violation. It seems like it's just coming out because it's an election year."