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Town wants second opinion on ex-chief's medical claim

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WINSTED — The town will hire its own doctor to give a second opinion of the condition of former Police Chief Jerold Silverio.

Silverio, who retired from the force in July 1992, has filed a workers' compensation claim against the town because he underwent open-heart surgery earlier that year.

Selectman Brian Sullivan said the board decided to seek the additional opinion because of the high cost of the proposed settlement.

"We are not pleased with the percentage claim his doctor is trying to award him," Sullivan said after the meeting. "The second opinion should lower the percentage to some degree, but the sad fact is that the taxpayers are going to pay."

Silverio's doctor is claiming Sullivan has lost 65 percent of his heart function as a result of the surgery. The proposed settlement calls for

Silverio to receive disability payments of \$491 a week for more than nine years. The disability payments would total nearly \$240,000.

The proposal also calls for Silverio to receive \$21,113, or \$491 a week for 43 weeks, as payment for scarring that resulted from the surgery.

The terms of the proposal were called ludicrous by some selectmen and several residents. Community Lawyer Charlene LaVoie said it is ridiculous for the town to have to pay that much money "for people abusing their own bodies."

Silverio already is receiving \$51,000 a year from the town, plus medical benefits from the settlement for his heart and hypertension claim. Under state law, police officers suffering from heart disease or hypertension may file claims against the town for lost earning ability as a result of their illness.

In other business, the selectmen voted not to advertise for a new

town labor attorney. Instead, the board will hire Robert Bourke, the current labor attorney, former interim Town Manager Paul Vayer and Catherine M. Thompson of Sullivan, Lettick and Schoon to their Dec. 6 meeting for interviews.

Sullivan initially requested that the town hire Vayer immediately, because Bourke was not adequately representing the town in its negotiations with labor unions.

"In my four years here, all I've seen is defeat after defeat," Sullivan said. "When you have someone you know can carry the ball, there is no

need to go any further."

But Mayor John Gauger Jr. said such a motion was not appropriate because the meeting agenda said the board members would only decide if they wanted to advertise for new counsel.