

Justice

To The Editor:

Town of Colton Justice Dennis Bulger explained that he is working 25-30 hours per week, with regular court sessions and the related work associated to court actions. He requested an increase this year to \$12,500 which was not approved.

Revenue from his department has actually more than paid for their proposed salaries. In 2006, \$32,885 was realized from fines and forfeitures, in 2007 to date, \$35,228 has been accumulated. He also wrote grants in 2006 and 2007, realizing \$1,600 and \$1,200 respectively to cover new computers and related software purchases.

During his tenure in office, Mr. Bulger has converted data stored in boxes to computer storage and has developed a model court system, which is one of the highest ranked in the state.

His salary in 2006 was \$7,650; in 2007 he was approved by vote of the town board for a \$10,000 salary. However, due to an error in publishing of proposed salaries for elected officials, his salary was also posted.

The only elected positions which need to be posted are those of elected town board members, elected town clerk and elected highway superintendents. Therefore, he was inappropriately deprived of the \$10,000 salary last year.

At the Oct.3 budget session, town board member Kilroy made a motion that, at a minimum, he be awarded the \$10,000 he should have received last year, plus the 3 percent COLA to a total of \$10,300. That motion was deadlocked, with Hawley and Kilroy voting yes and Swafford and Watson voting no.

At the Oct. 6 budget session, Mr. Swafford reported that, as the budget officer, he reviewed requests from the various departments and made changes, additions and deletions and came up with the tentative budget distributed. His justification in making these changes autonomously was due to "these trying times." He changed proposed salaries for elected officials to reflect the 3 percent COLA regardless of merit or work performance.

Conversely, he approved 5 percent salary increases for his bookkeeper reflecting on her level of performance, a 15 percent increase for the newly hired superintendent of DPW, who has not yet completed six months in the position and has not yet acquired either of the required certifications, and a 7.6 percent increase for the town clerk - an elected official. In addition to the 7.6 percent increase, she also was approved to receive up to \$1,800 in a separate budget allocation for census research and mileage.

I am not suggesting that the above listed individuals are not deserving of the increases but that Mr. Bulger is also deserving of the amount requested as attested by the level of work performance and actual money realized by the town from fines and forfeitures as a result of court action.

When he can make an exception for a specific individual who he feels has done an excellent job, he should also be flexible enough to award the \$10,000 which Mr. Bulger should have gotten last year and the 3 percent COLA to a total of \$10,300 at the very least.

It appears Mr. Swafford is not acting consistently and one wonders if personal animosities are reflected in his decisions. The town of Colton will be the big loser if Mr. Bulger is allowed to resign. He deserved the \$10,000 raise last year and he deserves the requested \$12,500 this year.

Grace Hawley

Colton Fiction

To The Editor:

The residents of the town of Colton hear and read a good deal from the Republican fiction writers. Statements are made without verification. I have served on the Colton Town Board for the past two years and have worked in the inner circle. I have learned a great deal. Here are some facts:

1). The former Assessor Chair resigned. He was not fired. His resignation letter is on file in the town hall.

2). The settlement with NYS did not double, triple or quadruple our taxes. The letter writer who stated he was putting aside \$800 to cover his increases paid approximately \$31.

3). No town employee has been fired or is at risk of being fired. A few employees have retired or resigned and a few have been hired. No one has been fired.

4). The town of Colton has in excess of \$1 million dollars in its fund balance. I just found that out and had to press hard to get that information. There is no state law regarding the percentage of a budget that can be kept in a fund balance. General accounting practice would limit it to 5- 10 percent of the annual budget. The town has in excess of 100 percent of its annual budget in a fund balance or reserve account.

5). The town has not had an external, independent audit in over 15 years. Mr. Swafford and Miss Watson both are against an independent audit and said that at the budget meetings when it was proposed by Mrs. Hawley.

6). The town hall operations lack acceptable internal controls for standard accounting practices. It would not be unusual that the individual who opens the mail is also the individual who handles the account and makes the bank deposit. There is a lack of standard separation of dues and no mail log.

7). For the past six months, Mr. Swafford has allowed an "open process" at town board meetings. This has resulted in individuals freely walking

about, walking in and out of the meeting, interrupting constantly, challenging statements and even telling two board members to "shut up". This conduct has gone unchecked and unnoticed by Mr. Swafford.

8). The million dollar grant announced for the town from the Economic Development Office of NYS is just that, a grant. It was secured for the town by Mr. Ford and came to the town with no strings attached. It's plan use is to improve Swift Field and the sidewalks in both hamlets.

9). The town justice has been denied a pay raise for the past two years. He has received a COLA of 3 percent, but no raise. He has requested a yearly salary of \$12,500. His court took in over \$85,000 in fines and fees in 2006.

He has received grants in the past three years to improve the operation and technology of the court. His justice court was selected by NYS Office of Court Administrations as an exemplary justice court and one that can be an example of best practices. Mr. Swafford and Miss Watson voted against his raise even though the court is self sufficient.

10). For the two years that the town of Colton tried to spray the Forest and Eastern Tent Caterpillars, Mr. Swafford and Miss Watson worked against those efforts. Mr. Swafford downsized the area to be sprayed. A non-voting member of the board was given veto rights by Mr. Swafford.

In the past two years I have learned and witnessed a good deal by serving on the town board. I have a much clearer

picture of the workings of the town government than I did when elected in 2005.

Therefore, I am encouraging you to vote for the Conservative candidate for town supervisor, Grace Hawley. The town has an opportunity to be about change. I ask that you vote for Grace Hawley.

Joan Kilroy
Town of Colton
Board member