

July 29, 1994

The Berlin Reporter

OPINION

Lining up for credit

The resignation of Berlin City Attorney Jack Crisp came as no surprise to those keeping a close eye on city politics.

One of the first hints came more than a year ago, when Crisp was named vice president of the New Hampshire Bar Association — a title that automatically jumps to president in the current year.

It became clear that Crisp had aspirations beyond Berlin.

The next hint was when he opened an office in Concord last year, a move soon followed by his family's departure to Franklin.

Some will say, in the wake of his resignation, that Mayor Yvonne Coulombe's attack on Crisp recently — for moving out of Berlin — helped push him out.

Others — councilmen and some members of the Berlin Taxpayer's Association — will say their vocal criticism should be given credit.

Richard Bosa may say it was his campaign alone that did the job.

Just for the record, the writing was on the wall well before these events took place. But that isn't the only question that will be raised in coming days.

There are those who now will speculate that Crisp was getting out before the walls fell in, before the city loses expensive and potentially embarrassing cases — notably the never-ending Richard Grondin legal battle.

But being an attorney is not like being a baseball player or a dentist. In these positions, it is more obvious if serious mistakes are made.

When Bill Buckner let the ball dribble through his legs in the sixth game of the 1986 World Series, it was immediately obvious who was at fault. When a dentist's drill slips, the pain and the blame is sharp and clear.

In the Grondin case, the immensely complicated legal process is more than three years old. And the final inning is yet to unfold.

On Monday, Crisp filed legal briefs with the New Hampshire Supreme Court in an attempt to win the Grondin case in one stroke. The details are too complicated to explain here, as the legal brief is 64 pages long.

So far, Crisp and the city have lost every round in the Grondin case, as is obvious when one considers that Grondin is back working for the Berlin Police Department.

The Supreme Court appeals are Crisp's last chance.

If he loses, then the speculators who believe Crisp was looking for an escape hatch will say they were right, and who could argue with them?

If he wins, then Crisp will have shown that he was right all along.

There are several other cases that Crisp has handled that have yet to reach their conclusion.

Although Crisp has made his departure from Berlin official, the final chapter on his tenure as city attorney has yet to be written.

- Ben Gagnon