

# Taxpayers group wants city to dump, sue Crisp

by C. Walker Perreault

**BERLIN** — The Berlin Taxpayers Association wants the city to file a malpractice suit against City Attorney Jack Crisp to recover thousands spent in legal fees.

Members of the Taxpayers Association will meet with City Manager Mitch Berkowitz tomorrow to ask that Crisp be fired and that malpractice proceedings begin.

Since June 1988, Berlin has paid Crisp \$354,743 in legal fees, according to city records.

"We request that you begin to initiate malpractice proceedings against attorney Crisp to recover these funds expended needlessly," Association President Richard Goulette says.

The legal expenses have deprived the city of dollars that should have been spent providing much needed city services, he argues.

What has the city received for its legal fees, asks the Taxpayer Association?

The Grondin issue persists. Crisp is petitioning Coos County Superior Court on the city's behalf to have back pay owed Berlin Police Lieutenant Richard Grondin put into an interest bearing account until the New Hampshire Supreme Court can rule on two appeals. If the city wins the appeals, the back pay, about \$60,000, would be

returned to city coffers and Grondin would likely be fired again.

But is all the legal jousting in the best interest of Berlin's taxpayers?

Taxpayer Association members don't think so.

"How many fire trucks and computers could we have bought [for what Crisp has been paid]?" asks Dick Bosa, a member of the Taxpayers Association and the Berlin Charter Commission.

Crisp is costing the city more than the city owes in back pay, he contends.

And the Grondin issue, based on the number of intertwined appeals and lawsuits hanging in the balance, is far from over.

How much will have to be spent before the matter is resolved? No one knows.

If the Taxpayer Association has its way, no more tax dollars will be spent with Crisp.

In the city's latest appeal to the state Supreme Court, Crisp argues that the Coos County Superior Court erred when it took jurisdiction of the Grondin case.

The appeal argues that the Superior Court had no legal right to rule on an injunction requested by Grondin to bar the Berlin Police Commission from firing him, which the court granted. The matter of Grondin's potential firing should have been addressed through the union contract — through the arbitration process, according to the appeal.

If this is true, shouldn't the city attorney have known at that time? asks Bosa.

Beyond the question of Crisp, the Taxpayers Association wants an investigation as to why the city has spent in excess of \$500,000 in legal fees over the past five years.



**OATH OF OFFICE** — Yvonne Coulombe is sworn in as Berlin's first woman mayor by City Attorney Jack Crisp. (Reporter photo by Josh Reynolds)

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