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BERLIN PUBLIC

Crisp resigns as Berlin's attorney

by Ben Gagnon

BERLIN — City Attorney Jack Crisp has resigned, citing his duties as president of the New Hampshire Bar Association and "the financial sacrifice incurred by charging the city reduced rates."

A press release issued by City Manager

Mich Berkowitz yesterday afternoon also noted that Crisp was resigning partly due to "the time commitment involved in handling all of the city's legal affairs under the current arrangement."

Neither Berkowitz nor Crisp were available for comment after the press release was issued at 4 p.m. It was not

clear what Berkowitz was referring to when he stated that Crisp handles "all of the city's legal affairs," as other attorneys represent the city on issues such as tax cases, Water Works matters and other legal issues.

The city attorney had come under fire recently from Mayor Yvonne Coulombe because Crisp has moved out of town, and now lives in Franklin. Crisp opened a law office in Concord last year.

During the past year, Crisp also had been criticized by various councilmen, and by members of the Berlin Taxpayer's



Jack Crisp

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Association.

Through all the criticism, Crisp defended his work, and Berkowitz stood by Crisp. The press release issued yesterday said Berkowitz accepted the city attorney's resignation "reluctantly."

Also, yesterday's press release stated that Crisp had received "the unanimous support of the Council at its July 11th meeting, at which pending litigation was reviewed."

Later in that meeting, Crisp told the Council of his decision to resign, and the Council sealed the minutes "in order to allow time for the city to address certain pending legal issues that would be affected by Attorney Crisp's resignation."

Berkowitz noted that Crisp would continue to serve the city in pending lawsuits in which he represents the city "until they are concluded."

Berkowitz noted that Crisp was hired in the mid-1980s, and "faced several sewer project lawsuits, all of which have now been settled as a result of his involvement."

The city manager added that "the role of the city attorney is not an easy one since the city tends to be involved in many complex issues, some of which ultimately end up as lawsuits. In recent years the city has become involved in a variety of litigation for which the city used Attorney Crisp's services along with other counsel."

In the press release, Berkowitz said he may split the day-to-day legal tasks from the more complex legal issues in the future. He would then assign a special counsel to the complex issues, as appointed by the City Council.

As Berkowitz was not available for comment it was unclear yesterday why the press release said the City Council would appoint a special counsel. It has been the city manager's responsibility to appoint counsel.

In addition, Crisp said he may be willing to handle specific cases on behalf of the city if requested to do so by the Council.

Finally, Berkowitz said he had enjoyed a good working relationship with Crisp but, "with regret, understood the issues that led to his decision."