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Chief pledges vow of silence

By Lois Marchand

Eagle-Tribune Writer

ATKINSON, N.H. -- Fed up with weekly attacks from selectmen, Police Chief Philip V. Consentino said he plans to make another run for the board next spring.

With old campaign signs salvaged from his chicken coop, the chief said he is being prompted to run by an on-going feud with Selectmen Chairman Fred J. Child. Chief Consentino was a selectman in the 1970s prior to becoming chief.

"I am tired of the reprehensible and disgusting attacks on the police chief and his family," he said, speaking in the third person. "I am totally embarrassed by the nature in which these meetings are conducted and feel that I owe the residents a reprieve from the constant ribbing and sarcastic comments."

To distance himself, he said he will no longer meet with selectmen to discuss police business. He will leave that job to his wife -- Officer Joanne Consentino. She will serve as police liaison until an administrative officer is appointed.

Chief Consentino said Mr. Childs questions everything from police patrols to payrolls to advertisements in the newspaper. Most recently, he questioned the appointment of David Consentino, Chief Consentino's son, to the police department.

"After 30 years on the police department, 20 years as chief, six years as a selectman, 17 years on the fire department, at this stage of my life I do not deserve this kind of treatment and I will not subject myself to it anymore," Chief Consentino said.

Chief Consentino said the recent selectmen's meetings may be amusing to Mr. Childs and to people watching on television, but they are an embarrassment to the police department and the town.

"I am quite confident that this new approach to this on-going problem will spare the residents of Atkinson any further embarrassment due to the unneeded and unwanted attention that has been focused on the 'Monday Night Live' selectmen's meetings," he said.

He said he approached Mr. Childs with an open handshake and willingness to put past differences behind them several months ago, but the positive attitude and cooperation he sought was short-lived, he said.

Mr. Childs was not available for comment this morning.

To prepare, the chief salvaged 20-year-old campaign signs from his chicken coop and put them in his front yard as a litmus test to see what kind of support he can expect.

The chief said he contacted the Secretary of State and was told he could serve as a selectman and as police chief as long as the chief's position was part time.

Chief Consentino is paid \$16,000 a year for his 24 hours a week -- a part-time position. However, Chief Consentino said he is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week and often puts in as many as 50 hours of police work a week for the town although he earns only his part-time salary.

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