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Opinion

# Chief should set good example

**Atkinson police Chief Philip V. Consentino should set the right example for the community and voluntarily comply — without conditions — with a Superior Court order requiring him to leave the room during selectmen's discussions of the departments he supervises.**

Instead, Consentino, the police chief/selectman/elderly affairs director, continues to thumb his nose at the court order. The latest theatrics by Atkinson's man of many hats threaten to hamstring town government for months.

Consentino's lawyer, town counsel Sumner Kalman, has filed a motion asking the state Supreme Court for "clarification" of what Consentino can do in town government under the terms of Superior Court Judge Kenneth McHugh's ruling. That effectively stays McHugh's threat to have Consentino arrested if he continued to violate the order to remove himself from board discussions.

Consentino did offer last week to stop talking about police and elderly affairs business with other board members pending the Supreme Court decision on his appeal. And the other selectmen, Fred Childs and John Sapia, assented to his

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proposal that the two of them also not discuss those departments either until Consentino's case is settled.

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That means it will be months before the selectmen take up any matter involving the police or elderly affairs. The Supreme Court doesn't convene again until January and a decision is unlikely before Consentino, who's said he won't run again, leaves office next March.

Consentino mocks the court order by taking a recess during the selectmen's meetings to go "find the police chief" to deliver the department's report. Sometimes he returns in a white polo shirt with "Atkinson Police Chief" in big black letters across the back.

Consentino's actions are a flagrant slap against the court's authority. Indeed, it should not have required an arrest threat to get the town's chief law-enforcement official to obey a lawful court order in the first place.

The legal wrangling is less significant than the disrespectful attitude conveyed by Consentino's continuing efforts to keep wearing as many hats as he wants in town, regardless of what anyone thinks or the cost to the community's image.

Town business — particularly police and elderly affairs business — shouldn't be put on hold over Consentino. One man should not be allowed to set the entire town's agenda.

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