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Police second-in-command promoted to lieutenant

By Margo Sullivan
Staff writer

ATKINSON — Sgt. William Baldwin has moved up to the rank of lieutenant, a job he once went to court to obtain.

Selectmen promoted him this week, calling him a credit to the town.

Baldwin thanked the selectmen for the promotion and said it showed their faith in his abilities. He said he appreciated "a lot of public support out there," adding "I do love this community."

Baldwin filed a lawsuit against Atkinson in 2003, claiming he had not received fair consideration for a promotion and had also been denied regular pay raises. At that time, he said then-selectmen Chairman Brian Boyle had stymied his hopes for advancement due to a "personal conflict."

In responding to the lawsuit, which was ultimately settled without Baldwin being promoted, Boyle said the selectmen decided in 2002 the Police Department did not need a lieutenant but that if they hired one they should choose from a pool that included other "highly qualified" people on the force. Boyle also said he expected the candidate should have a college degree and 10 to 15 years of experience.

Baldwin is not a college graduate. He has 60 credits at Franklin College, which puts him about halfway toward earning a bachelor's degree, according to Selectman John Sapia. Sapia said he thought Baldwin's resume put him in line for the job. Baldwin joined the Atkinson Police Department in 1998 as a part-time officer. He had served as a military police officer before that.

"Sgt. Baldwin," Sapia said at Monday's selectmen's meeting,

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This article from 200506

**HOMES**
NORTH

Pam McKee
Marketing Agent

"I think you're a credit to the town. You're clean-cut and squared away. I know you're dedicated to your position."

Sapia said the rank of lieutenant "designates what he's been doing" as the second-in-line at the Police Department.

Sapia defeated Boyle in the March 8 annual town election.

Baldwin campaigned for Sapia, but Sapia said his vote was not political payoff.

"If anything, that put him under a microscope," he said. Sapia said he voted to promote Baldwin because he believes he is qualified and because the police chief recommended him.

Selectmen voted to give him the promotion without a pay raise.

Baldwin was earning \$1,028 a week in 2004. He was eligible for another 3 percent pay hike a year ago. The town bookkeeper could not be reached to verify his current salary.

Selectmen Fred Childs and Sapia both had to agree on the promotion because selectmen Chairman Philip V. Consentino, who is also the police chief, recused himself from the board so he could speak as a department head and recommend Baldwin.

Childs asked for assurances Baldwin would continue working patrols. He also noted that Baldwin was not entitled to union contract benefits.

Consentino read a letter from Earl M. Sweeney, assistant commissioner with the state Department of Safety.

Consentino said Sweeney, acting as an unpaid consultant, interviewed Baldwin and deemed him fit for the job. He also indicated the recommendation "should not be construed as official."

Sweeney could not be reached for comment. His office said he was away for the week. In his letter, he indicated Baldwin was the ranking full-time officer.

But Mark Acciard, chairman of the Municipal Budget Committee, said in fact, the ranking full-time officer is Sgt. Diane M. Kinney.

"She's been a sergeant for 20 years," he said. "Baldwin hasn't even been a cop for that long."

Acciard said yesterday he respects Baldwin but was astonished the selectmen hired a lieutenant.

"I've never seen a position created and handed out without being advertised," Acciard said. He also said the communities that did hire lieutenants chose college graduates with at least 10 years of experience on a police force.

With Baldwin's promotion, Atkinson joins Kingston as the only other area police department with a lieutenant in communities with comparable populations.

This was the second promotion the selectmen have granted police officers this year. Earlier, John Lapham was promoted to corporal.

Lapham and Baldwin are not members of the police union. Baldwin was already an officer when the union formed and was not eligible to join the rank and file.

Consentino, Childs and Boyle did not return telephone calls seeking comment.

Town Rank of Lieutenant Full-Time Officers Part-Time Officers Total

Atkinson 1 6 16 22

Chester 0 2 9 11

Danville 0 - - 11

Derry 5 - - 60

Hampstead 0 7 1 8

Kingston 1 9 6 15

Londonderry 5 - - 48

Newton 0 5 4 9

Pelham 0 - - 19

Plaistow 0 - - 16

Salem 5 - - 60

Sandown 0 6 7 13

Windham 0 - - 18

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