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# Resident asks if ethics enforced

By Andy Smith  
Staff Writer

ATKINSON -- A former town employee says the chairman of the selectmen got off with a slap on the wrist from the town's Ethics Committee for authorizing payments to her husband and brother-in-law, and questions if enough is being done to monitor potential conflicts of interest in town.

But board Chairman Barbara Stewart said yesterday she has nothing to hide and is only guilty of making a couple careless errors. She said she has been forthright with voters about potential conflicts during her nine years as a selectman.

Jill Fleming, who worked as Budget Committee secretary for several years and as a clerk in the selectmen's office between 1999 and 2000, said yesterday that while looking through the 2002 town budget, she noticed Stewart's husband Robert had received payments totalling \$38,891 as a general contractor.

"Looking through the budget, I noticed how much her husband had made plowing and that really jumped out at me," she said. "Nobody else earned nearly that much, and the town has other plowers who would love the work, so what makes him so special?"

Fleming said she researched the payments and found Stewart had signed vouchers authorizing checks for both her husband and her brother-in-law, Edward Stewart, the town's road agent.

At a nonpublic meeting with selectmen, Fleming said she requested Stewart resign and put the work being done by her husband out to bid. When selectmen denied those requests,

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