

WARREN T+G.
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Selectmen mum about employee discipline

Missing equipment prompts investigation

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WARREN — An unidentified town Highway Department employee has been disciplined by the Board of Selectmen after an investigation into missing town equipment.

Selectmen David A. Delanski and Robert W. Souza Jr. said yesterday that talk around town that the board is trying to sweep the matter under the rug is untrue.

Mr. Souza said he is satisfied that action was taken in the best interest of the town, but in his opinion it did not go far enough.

"I'm upset about it," he said. "I'm upset that we couldn't do any more than we did."

"We were told by town counsel that if we took any further action we would lose a court battle and it would cost the

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town a lot of money," Mr. Souza said. "The stiffest disciplinary action allowable by law was taken."

Mr. Delanski said the employee's name cannot be released and the type of disciplinary action taken cannot be divulged until town counsel instructs selectmen on what information can be provided, since the discussion was held behind closed doors last month.

"The board will release some kind of a statement later," he said. "Absolutely nothing was swept under the rug."

The Telegram & Gazette has requested copies of the minutes of two executive sessions held on this subject.

Mr. Souza said it came to the board's attention last summer, in bits and pieces, that two backhoe buckets and a related piece of equipment were missing from the Highway Department's inventory, but more recently that equipment was returned to the Highway Department.

Late last year, the matter was turned over to Warren Police Chief Bruce D. Spiewakowski for investigation and later assigned to state police for an inquiry.

"To the best of my knowledge, the state police did their investi-

gation and up to this point there are no charges being filed," Mr. Souza said.

The value of the missing equipment previously was placed at about \$900, but Mr. Souza confirmed that he has since been told that perhaps \$1,800 was spent in the past by the town to repair the equipment in question.

Mr. Delanski said the investigation is a lot more complicated than people might assume. It was not a cut-and-dried case of alleged theft, but instead perhaps a misunderstanding.

"There were extenuating circumstances and upon review by town counsel, the board handled the matter on the advice of town counsel," he said. "What we did was to the limit of what we could do."

