

Colton Officials Invite Attorney

By LARRY ROBINSON

COLTON - Elected officials here want town attorney Eric Gustafson to start attending monthly meetings to avoid legal snafus like one this week that forced the town board to re-hold a public hearing on raising the town justice's salary.

The board had to hold a public hearing and vote to raise the salary of Colton Town Justice Denny Bulger by \$3,000 for the second time Wednesday because of a previous mistake in not publishing a legal notice in the newspaper pointing out the salary change was subject to permissive referendum.

The Colton board originally voted on the politically charged issue back in April.

This week the board voted for a second time to raise Bulger's salary to \$12,500 annually beginning this year.

The measure passed by a four to one margin with Supervisor Bill Swafford casting the sole no vote.

Later during the same meeting Councilwoman Joan Kilroy suggested that having the town attorney present at monthly board meetings could alleviate similar mistakes.

It was a sentiment echoed by fellow council members Grace Hawley, Joe Zelinski and

Catherine Hayes.

Following a unanimous resolution, Swafford said he would contact Gustafson and ask if he could attend regular monthly meetings of the town board on the second Wednesday of the month.

"I'll contact him and see if he can make it," said Swafford. "I don't know if he has conflicts on Wednesdays or not."

In other board action, Supervisor Swafford stifled the public comments of local senior citizen and property owner Charlie Gerrish who approached the board to complain about a 50-year dispute with the township over a property right of way.

Swafford refused to hear Gerrish, who has made his case to town officials and is now threatening legal action. Because of that legal threat, Swafford said the board has been advised by their attorney to offer to more comment.

After Swafford told Gerrish he had no right to speak, the octogenarian left the town hall - but not without a parting shot to the public in attendance.

"I know I've been kicked out of this meeting, but loss of liberties can happen to you too," he said facing the public. "It can happen to you."