

## **Saugerties Board, Police Chief May Settle His Claim, Lawyer Says**

The attorney for town Police Chief Gregory Hulbert, who was placed on administrative leave Jan. 11, says he expects the Town Board to hold a special meeting Wednesday to discuss a settlement with Hulbert over a notice of claim alleging breach of contract and defamation.

Attorney Mathew Tully stressed Monday that Hulbert is not facing disciplinary charges and had already been considering retirement this summer before he was placed on administrative leave.

Tully, who represents Hulbert on behalf of the state Police Chiefs Benevolent Association Defense Fund, said it is easier and makes more economic sense for his client to retire than to continue to have his reputation questioned as a result of the administrative leave and statements made about him.

Tully said a notice of claim filed by Hulbert against the town, Town Board and town Supervisor Gregory Helsmoortel is still pending. He said he believes the board will meet Wednesday to discuss a settlement agreement that Hulbert has already approved. If the settlement is agreed to by the board, it will resolve Hulbert's claims against the town, Tully said.

Hulbert could retire July 1, after 30 years of service to the town, Tully said. He said Hulbert went to Town Hall Friday to inquire about retirement, which led to comments in the Freeman from Helsmoortel stating the chief had submitted his retirement papers. Tully said it is his understanding Hulbert submitted his retirement paperwork on Monday, but he has until June 20 to rescind that move.

Helsmoortel declined to comment Monday.

Tully added that no disciplinary charges have been brought against his client and there has been no official explanation given by the town as to why Hulbert was placed on leave.

"My client is not suspended," Tully said. "My client is not facing any disciplinary charges." He said past comments made by town officials and incorrect headlines in newspapers stating Hulbert was suspended have given the false impression the chief had done something wrong. Tully said a suspension is an adverse action, while administrative leave is given for a variety of reasons.

Shortly after he was placed on leave, Hulbert said it might have been related to an incident on Jan. 9 in which town Police Officer John Mullen was maced and punched in the face by a driver he had stopped for lacking license plates. When Mullen drew his weapon, according to police, the suspect took off toward the Greene County line. Mullen was not seriously injured, according to police. No one has been arrested in that case.

Tully said Hulbert was not on duty and was not scheduled to work at the time of the incident. In addition to the chief, Sgt. John Scheffel was also placed on paid administrative leave. The

police department, in the meantime, has been overseen by Sergeants Donald Tucker and Kevin Drescher.