

*“I told them not to do that because it’s against our policy to do politicking while on duty. Nothing was erected while anybody was on duty.”*

**CHIEF GREGORY BEGIN**  
Weare police

# Weare police get an earful

◆ **Political signs:** George Hodgdon, owner of Palmer’s Tavern in town, says on-duty police have been helping the reelection campaign of the chief.

By **DAN O’BRIEN**  
Union Leader Correspondent

**WEARE**— The owner of Palmer’s Tavern filed a complaint

Friday against the Weare Police Department, alleging on-duty, uniformed officers asked to place a political sign for incumbent Police Chief Gregory Begin on his property, violating state and federal campaign laws.

The complaint, filed just four days before the police chief



**HODGDON**

## Weare

because he made a cell phone call during a traffic stop.

Seth Hipple, the attorney for Palmer’s owner, George Hodgdon, 61, of Weare, said Hodgdon is being harassed by Weare police officers, including one who threatened to put Hodgdon out of business because he would not hire them to work private security details last year.

“Last March, Officer Joe Kelly asked George if he could do detail work on Friday and Saturday nights at Palmer’s,” Hipple said. “George told him he couldn’t afford to do that.”

That has caused Hodgdon problems with police, Hipple said.

Begin said he heard about the allegation previously and the department investigated it internally.

“That’s a personnel issue that has been investigated and dealt with,” Begin said. “There was nothing founded on the allegation.”

Hodgdon is facing trial March 15 in Goffstown District Court for allegedly interfering with an investigation into the April 30, 2010, assault of Deering Selectman John Greene at Palmer’s Tavern.

The wire-tap case and improper political activity accusation are among several issues involving Weare police and public scrutiny.

The New Hampshire Attorney General’s Office received a complaint from former Weare Sgt. Lou Chatel last summer alleging several officers lied on time cards

about the number of hours working special details.

A call to the Attorney General’s Office for comment was not immediately returned Friday.

Chatel has filed a federal lawsuit against Begin, Lt. James Carney and the town of Weare after the pair complained to the Attorney General’s Office that Chatel might have been manufacturing child pornography last year. Authorities cleared Chatel of any wrongdoing.

For the latest allegation involving the political signs, Hipple wrote in a complaint that on or about Feb. 18, Officer Kenneth Cox and another officer who was not identified arrived at Palmer’s Tavern in a Weare police car and in full uniform and asked Hodgdon to install a Begin reelection sign outside his establishment. Begin is running against New Hampshire State Police Sgt. Larry Bolduc in the police chief race. Paul Massaro, a retired state police trooper, dropped out of the race last week.

“Mr. Hodgdon has faced his share of harassment from Weare police officers,” Hipple wrote. “Fearing repercussions should he say no, Mr. Hodgdon agreed to have the sign erected, but has since removed it.

“Using public employees’ time for reelection activities is obviously a violation of state and federal campaign laws,” Hipple wrote.

Begin acknowledged in a phone interview that two officers did arrive at Palmer’s to talk to Hodgdon while on duty, but the sign was erected by off-duty officers.

“I told them not to do that because it’s against our policy to do

politicking while on duty,” Begin said. “Nothing was erected while anybody was on duty.”

Begin said he was driving by Palmer’s when he noticed a police car outside the bar, and informed Cox later not to campaign while on duty.

Begin said Cox initially talked to Hodgdon while off-duty, but Hipple denies that.

Hodgdon was arrested about two months after the April 30 fight involving the Deering selectman for allegedly misleading a police investigation.

Hipple said the charges stem from Kelly’s personal vendetta against Hodgdon for not hiring him and other officers to work details. Hipple said police held about 30 patrons at the bar for questioning for at least three hours the night of the fight, something police have not disputed.

Hodgdon told police he did not witness the fight because he was working in the kitchen. Hodgdon, who walks with a cane, said he was unable to get into the restaurant area quickly enough to see what was happening.

In the complaint, Hipple alleges that Kelly responded to Hodgdon’s comment by saying, “cripples shouldn’t own bars” and that he was going to “put (Hodgdon) out of business.”

“After that, there’s been a pattern at Palmer’s Tavern, with police targeting customers and pulling them over,” Hipple said in a phone interview Friday.

Begin said Hodgdon has made similar complaints to Weare’s Board of Selectmen, and the chief denies that officers have been targeting patrons.

“It’s a matter of where the

drunks are going to be coming from, and the answer is Manchester,” Begin said. “So how do they come into Weare from Manchester? Route 114.”

From January 2008 to Friday, there have been 112 arrests for DWI in Weare. Thirty-seven of those arrests were in south Weare, which includes Route 114, on which the tavern is located. The last car crash involving a Palmer’s patron who was under the influence was in September 2009, on Gould Road, police said.

Alleman, who was pulled over shortly after a rally was held at Palmer’s to support Hodgdon on July 10, was charged last week with felony wiretapping in connection with the traffic stop. Police charged Alleman for allegedly calling a voice mail service and not getting consent of the officer to record him.

Bolduc, who is running against Begin in the police chief race, said Friday he did not want to comment on any particular criminal cases but said he has nothing against civilians recording police activity.

“If someone pulled out a cell phone and recorded me, I think that’s fair game,” Bolduc said. “Should I stop a vehicle on the side of the road and someone said they want to audio and video tape this, I’d have no issue with it.”

“I’ve heard a lot of very good things about officers in this town and I’ve heard not-so-nice things,” Bolduc said. “I’m going to work on building this department from the foundation up. I want it to be ethically based and value-based. I’m not going to accept anything less.”

Continued From Page A1