

Council Fires Menard While Audience Jeers

By **BOB RIEL**

CALL Staff Writer

HARRISVILLE — The Burrillville Town Council last night fired Police Chief Joseph A. Menard after unanimously finding him guilty of misconduct, neglect of duties, and insubordination.

The decision will apparently send the case to Providence Superior Court, as Menard said he plans to appeal the verdict.

The vote to fire the chief was 4-1, with Councilman Dennis B. Flynn opposed. Flynn refused to say why he cast the lone vote against dismissal.

The vote was taken in front of about 100 people. The crowd packed the hearing room and spilled into the hallway, with some even peering through a side window.

office as Chief of Police; incapacity of ability to administrate the police department; neglect of duties as chief under rules and regulations instituted by him, and insubordination."

After the hearing, Menard said he will "definitely" appeal to Superior Court. "Frankly, I'd like to get some of these people in court," he said.

William A. Dimitri Jr., Menard's lawyer, echoed the same view. "We're looking for a fair hearing in Superior Court," he said.

Asked if the decision was expected, Dimitri replied, "You've got to be kidding ... I expected nothing more than this because the council was acting as accuser and judge."

The last two scheduled hearings,

When the decision was announced, it drew jeers from the audience, many of whom vowed to retaliate at the polls.

One man shouted that "on Nov. 2, we'll move them all," apparently alluding to the fact that every councilman who voted to fire Menard is seeking re-election.

The council's decision was outlined in a 14-page statement that Councilman Fred Chiarini Jr. read into the record at the start of the hearing. The decision took him more than 20 minutes to read.

The statement reviews all of the evidence and testimony against Menard, much of which was contained in the Bill of Particulars.

The decision concludes that, based on "credible evidence," Menard is guilty of "misconduct in



CHIEF MENARD

both of which were postponed due to the illness of a councilman, were scheduled at odd times, Dimitri said, apparently to minimize the probable crowd size.

Menard said he expected the guilty verdict and said he believed the vote would be "almost unanimous." He predicted the decision will affect the town election.

The people "are still behind me and I think it's going to show at the polls. Some of them (the councilmen) could take a ride," he said.

"Apparently, the petition did not faze the council," Menard said.

Last month, a petition pledging support of the chief was signed by

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"approximately" 1,127 town residents, according to Town Clerk Norman Mainville. There are about 6,500 registered voters in Burrillville.

"I don't think they had any evidence against me," Menard said. "I feel it's in retaliation for the lawsuit I have against them."

The suit was filed against the council, collectively and individually, after Menard was suspended without pay from Sept. 18 to Oct. 12 last year for refusing to attend a meeting as ordered by the council.

The suit asks for punitive and compensatory damages, charging that the council violated state and local laws and his constitutional rights by suspending him.

The council countered with a suit against Menard, saying the chief's action was an attempt to intimidate and harass them. Both suits are pending.

If Menard's appeal is successful, he said he still hopes to return to work in the Burrillville Police Department. "It gets in your blood," he said.

Until then, however, he will have to find another job.

"I'll go to work somewhere. I'm a carpenter by trade anyway," he said.

Menard had been suspended with pay for the past three months, while the judicial hearing was conducted. But the council's decision to fire him means he will stop collecting a paycheck.

Menard Supporters Irked at Decision

By **BOB RIEL**

CALL Staff Writer

HARRISVILLE — Last night, after the decision to fire Police Chief Joseph A. Menard had been announced, a small crowd gathered on the lawn outside the Town Building and discussed the verdict.

They stood there in the chilly nighttime air, as the council held a closed meeting inside behind locked doors. The councilmen were said to be discussing Democratic party affairs.

The residents weren't happy with the council's decision to fire "Archie" Menard. When asked for their views, all of them jeered.

An elderly woman bundled in a heavy jacket said her feelings about the councilmen couldn't be put into print. Next to her, a young lady smiled in agreement.

The residents were also unanimous in their belief that the verdict will affect the Nov. 2 town election.

Every councilman who voted to fire Menard is seeking re-election. Dennis B. Flynn, who voted for a guilty verdict but cast the lone vote against firing Menard, is stepping down from the council.

In addition, Councilmen Philip Anderson and Norman Mainville, who both testified against Menard, are running for office. Anderson is seeking re-election to the council and Mainville is running for town treasurer.

"We're all Democrats who aren't Democrats," said one woman.

She explained that although she has been a Democrat her entire life, she will vote Republican in the town election because of the council's decision. Everyone nodded in agreement.

The views of the crowd appeared to reflect the opinion of many town residents. When the decision was announced at the public hearing, nearly the entire audience jeered.

"On Nov. 2, we'll move them all (the councilmen)," shouted one man.

In interviews after the hearing was adjourned, many residents said they believed the council made the wrong decision. Most people, however, expected the outcome.

"The council had no choice. They painted themselves into a corner," said one lady.

The potential effect on the council election has not been lost on Burrillville Republicans, who are hungry to make any possible inroads into this solidly Democratic government.

Joan Wiesner, Republican town committee chairman, said she has heard the rumors of discontent from town residents. If Republicans are elected to a Town Council majority, she said, it's possible they will vote to reinstate Menard as police chief.

Later last night, a town resident who couldn't attend the hearing telephoned *The Call* for news about the council's decision.

When he was told that Menard had been fired, he said, "Those guys don't want to get re-elected, do they?"