

More discipline for Amati?

Woodstock council calls session to look at firing sergeant

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WOODSTOCK – The City Council will re-examine its options for further punishment to Sgt. Chip Amati, including his possible firing.

Council members started Tuesday night's packed, emotional and often tense meeting by calling a special executive

session to follow planned agenda items wherein they would discuss further action "up to and including termination, if appropriate and feasible, and within our legal authority and procedure," Mayor Brian Sager said.

The council widely was supportive of a public seeking more answers and further punishment. Sager was moved to

near tears as he spoke, stopping more than once to gather himself.

"Nobody feels as much disgust, outrage, betrayal and anger as the members of this City Council," Sager said.

It's unclear what council support ultimately means, and what steps are available to the council, but members said they'd seek further repercus-

sions for Amati during executive session.

"I have that same question," Councilman Mike Turner told a woman inquiring about the next step. "What else? What other opportunities do we have?"

During an investigation of Amati that began in August,

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state police found he misused the Law Enforcement Agencies Data System – a felony under state law – and sent inappropriate texts to the 12-year-old daughter of his girlfriend at the time.

The 24-year veteran of the force was given the city's maximum 30-day suspension without pay by the Board of Police and Fire Commissioners, but wasn't charged criminally and maintains his job.

City Attorney Richard Flood said the power to fire an officer is reserved for the state Legislature and the board which originally sanctioned Amati.

"[The Board of Police and Fire Commissioners] have the ability to fire an officer if charges are brought against him," Flood said. "Normally when this occurs an officer will hire a lawyer, and the proceedings can be extensive at times."

An already tense crowd grew more anxious for a moment when, shortly after public comments closed, Woodstock resident Gus Philpott stood up at his seat to warn the council about an issue of safety. Just outside the door to the council chambers, a couple men in masks stood peering in.

After initial confusion, Sager asked Police Chief Robert Lowen to escort the men away from the door and request more police if necessary. He did so, but not before Tara Jenkins, who'd spoken to the council already, walked toward the door and then turned back toward the chambers.

"This is ridiculous," she snapped. "These men are here to help us."

The men were members of a small rally by the Chicago chapter of the International hacker group Anonymous. The group, which had planned to arrive and march from the train station at 6:30 p.m., was unseen before the meeting. Later, as eight of them stood in masks in City Hall's entryway, several said their train was late. None offered their names.

About eight people – most Woodstock residents – spoke during the public comment portion of Tuesday's meeting. Conversations were generally amicable but impassioned, with a couple speakers ranging toward hostile.

Jenkins, a Woodstock resident, said she'd been uninterested in the city's official workings until Amati's suspension. As a mother, the news hit her hard, she said.

Jenkins delivered a prepared appeal of more than five minutes to the council.

"In no other profession could one count on a workplace suspension to take the place of a felony criminal



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The Chicago chapter of the international hacker group Anonymous held a rally Tuesday during the Woodstock City Council meeting. The group held the rally to demand that Sgt. Chip Amati be fired and charged with a crime. Amati, a 24-year veteran, was suspended without pay for the maximum 30 days after an investigation revealed he sent inappropriate text messages to a 12-year-old girl and misused the Law Enforcement Agencies Data System.

charge," she said.

Steven Larrick, who also lives in Woodstock, focused his remarks on abuse of the LEADS system, which Amati had been in charge of prior to the incident. Larrick called for a further investigation "to see if other people within the department also committed the

same acts."

After the portion of the meeting concerning Amati ended, Larrick said he felt the council listened to those who spoke. But he felt the prospect of more consequences for Amati could hinge on the State's Attorney's Office re-examining criminal charges.