

City vs. Saratoga Springs Civil Service Commission reaches state Supreme Court

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SARATOGA SPRINGS — The city's battle with the Saratoga Springs Civil Service Commission made its way to state Supreme Court Wednesday. According to Mayor Scott Johnson, city officials filed the legal challenge to the commission's July decision restricting the ability of assistant building inspectors to issue building permits.

In July, the city's Civil Service Commission changed the job description for assistant building inspectors, restricting their ability to issue permits, something they had been doing since 2008.

Because the building inspector position has been vacant for more than a year, that meant no one in the office could issue permits allowing residents to build new structures or even put a deck on their house. Operations in the building department essentially ground to a halt.

The city has retained private counsel, the law firm of Fitzgerald Baker, to handle the suit against the commission. Johnson could not say how much the challenge is likely to cost the city.

Johnson said he feels the city is backed into a corner and has no choice but to challenge the commission's position. "What's my choice? Shut down the building department? I don't think that's a viable option," he said.

Commission Secretary Patsy Berrigan declined comment on the case Thursday.

The building inspector position — which had been reclassified to encompass the responsibility of zoning enforcement — is not currently posted. Johnson said that is because the commission also decided in July to abolish that position's new description.