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## **Wilton town report dedicated to outgoing Selectman Paul Gooch**

By Donna M. Perry, Staff Writer

WILTON — Russell Black told fellow Selectman Paul Gooch as he arrived Thursday morning at a special board meeting, “Now we have a quorum.”

“You already had a quorum,” Gooch said as he saw Chairman Terry Brann and Selectman D. Scott Taylor standing next to Black.

Then the truth came out.

The reason for the special meeting was to give Gooch the first town report for the fiscal year ending June 30. It’s a tradition, Town Manager Rhonda Irish said.

The person the report is dedicated to each year gets the first copy.

Gooch was handed a report and some joking and ribbing went on amongst the board members.

Gooch is resigning as selectman effective at the June town meeting.

He and his wife, Sue, plan to move to Wells, where her family’s homestead and farm are located.

“He has been an asset to the Board of Selectmen,” Black said. “He’s been here 35 years. He’s been a public servant. ... We just felt Paul deserved it. He was the balance on the left.”

Gooch affirmed that.

“I was the balance on the left,” he said, while other selectmen swung to the conservative right.

Gooch and his family moved to Wilton decades ago when he took a position as principal of the elementary school.

He served as principal of the Wilton and Weld elementary schools for 27 years, retiring in 2005 after 35 years in education. Prior to becoming an administrator, he was a teacher.

He has been a selectmen in Wilton since 2005 and served as chairman of the board for two of those years.

“I chose to live here and I chose to stay here a couple of times,” Gooch said. He was offered other jobs during that time but turned them down to stay in Wilton, he said.

“I raised two great kids and helped raise hundreds of others,” he said.

He enjoyed serving the people in the area both in education and as a town leader.

“It’s what my life was, what my career was,” he said.

He just went from one set of politics to another.

“The calling here was service to my community,” Gooch said. “I enjoyed the politics here in Wilton.”

He’s not sure if that will carry on in Wells, he said. Right now he has no aspirations toward it.

“There is some solace in relation to anonymity,” he said, although the people in Wells know his wife, because other family members live there.

Gooch said he is looking forward to fishing in the salt water.

“I grew up on salt water, so the smell is back,” he said.

Though he does not know how much farming he plans to do, he and his wife plan to dig up their raspberries to take with them to their new home.

The last line of the dedication of 2012 report says it all.

“Thank you for your years of exemplary service to our town.”