
(EXTERNAL MESSAGE) Comment on proposed ordinance

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Please include these comments as feedback on the Town of Coventry's Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Committee proposed ordinance for the Public Meeting scheduled for September 18, 2025.

The proposed ordinance is defective as written and requires revision before further action is taken upon it.

1. The broad definition of "Air gun" in Section 66-76 includes paintball guns and airsoft guns. Both types of guns are "capable" of "injuring" and "inflicting physical damage." An alternative definition for purposes of this ordinance should specify that an air gun includes only those devices with a projectile caliber less than or equal to 0.22 inches, or with muzzle velocity greater than 700 feet per second. Air guns that do not meet those definitions should not be subject to the stringent provisions of this ordinance. Excluding low-power devices in this ordinance does not mean that their misuse is not proscribed by other laws covering endangerment, property damage, or disorderly conduct.
2. Section 66-77(a) contains these flaws:
 1. Property owners are wrongly privileged over lessees. If a lease does not already prohibit a lessee from recreational shooting then the town should not do the work of the lessor in regulating the permitted property uses. For example, under this ordinance a lessee of a house could not fire a pellet gun in the basement of the house they rent.
 2. Makes no allowance for properties not owned by a natural person. For example, a property title could be held by a living trust, and the beneficiary of the trust would have no lawful ability to shoot an air gun on his or her property.
 3. "Have on their person the written permission" is not rationally related to public safety. A person could have received written permission, not have it on their person, and in all other respects be operating safely and within the bounds of the ordinance and still be criminalized by this ordinance.
3. Most of Section 66-78 (b) is not rationally related to public safety or noise control. A requirement to notify the police department in advance does nothing to reduce complaints or the activities of target shooters. Aggrieved people will always complain. Complainants cannot reliably tell the difference between a nail gun and an air gun. Complainants cannot reliably tell the difference between a ramset device and a pistol. Complainants cannot reliably tell the difference between hunting and target shooting. Pre-notification only serves to chill otherwise lawful activity by imposing bureaucracy. This section should be corrected to simply read "Persons engaged in recreational shooting shall have a four (4) hour window per calendar day in

which to do so" which would be a reasonable mitigation. Complainants remain free to gather evidence of ordinance violations and submit their complaints for enforcement.

4. Section 66-79 contains these flaws:

1. None of these activities in a, b, c, d, f, g, and h fit the ordinance's definition of "recreational shooting" and would be automatically excluded from the regulation even if not itemized. To include a few named exceptions is to suggest that anything not specifically named is suspect. Each of these lettered subsections should be struck.
2. Part (e): Any clubs or commercial shooting ranges should already be in compliance (and should want to be in compliance) with the safety-related parts of the ordinance. If a time window is included in the final ordinance, then clubs or shooting ranges can be specifically exempted from only the time window requirement.

Ordinances ought to be drafted narrowly to solve specific problems, with careful attention to the preservation of existing rights and privileges.

Sincerely,
Owen Swift
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