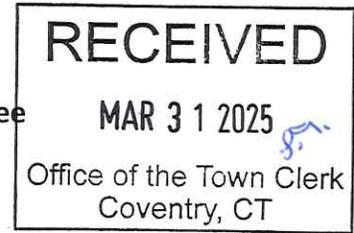


Town of Coventry
 Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee
 Meeting Minutes
 Thursday March 20, 2025



1. Call To Order, Roll Call:

By: Murray Time: 6:36 p.m. Place: Conference Room B & Zoom

		PRESENT	ABSENT
REGULAR MEMBERS:	Brian Murray, Chairperson	X	
	Vacant, Vice Chairperson		X
	Dudley Brand	X	
	Kenneth Stein	X	
	Carolyn Batz-remote	X	
STAFF:	Jana Roberson, Director of Planning & Dev't.	X	
	Chief of Police Eric Peterson	X	

Also present: Special Projects Coordinator Alex Taylor.

Chief Peterson left the meeting at 7:57 PM.

2. Approval Of Minutes:

A. Minutes, February 20, 2025:

Motion: I move to accept the February 20th, 2025, Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee Meeting Minutes.

By: Brand Second: Stein

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimously in favor

3. Review of Committee Questions for Police Chief:

Chief Peterson reviewed a list of questions to assess the Police Department's capability to manage suggested inclusions in the potential ordinance:

- Impacts and Capability of inspecting and/or registering home ranges.

Chief Peterson explained that this is something the department could fit in and will not impact operations. He added that he is not an expert on home ranges but will use common sense with inspections and follow guidelines included in an ordinance. He liked the idea that this will keep them registered with the town.

Roberson explained that the Land Use Department has permit management software to track, keep record, and make reports. The Police Department can simply sign off on the permits following the inspections.

- How many Home Shooting Ranges in town?

Chief Peterson explained he is familiar with about 8 but only knows of these due to problems that have been reported. He believes there are a lot more. Additionally, any existing home range would need to comply with an adopted ordinance otherwise it would no longer be allowed.

- Permit Holder list is private and confidential. Would FOIA requests for range information be allowed?

Chief Peterson will have to contact the Town's attorney to get more information. Most often information would be redacted.

- Enforcing safety and range design

Chief Peterson stated he would follow guidelines of the ordinance in terms of distance and berm set up, making sure that it is adequate to stop what is being fired as requested by the committee.

Additionally, he will need to reach out to the Town's attorney on liability of the town, if the Police Department signs off on a range being safe, and there is an issue. He also suggested that he will need to research whether or not the Police Department actually has to inspect it or can just sign off on the registration. Liability will likely be limited just from inspecting the physical layouts of the ranges to make sure they meet the ordinance guidelines. Any issues that arise will most likely be from improper behavior or negligence.

- Time of Day Complaints and Enforcement

Chief Peterson explained that he has received complaints that directly relate to time of day and duration of shooting. However, the complaints are focused to 1 specific range but come from multiple people in the neighborhood.

He added that recent complaints haven't be directly related to distance, but more with the caliber of bullet that is being shot. The bigger the caliber, the louder the noise. This makes it difficult because the caliber can't be regulated, but maybe increasing the distance would help.

- Calling before shooting

Chief Peterson agreed this would be a good idea and would help them address calls and save department resources if they knew shooting was going on at a specific time, in a specific area. He also felt that calling 15 minutes ahead of time, for a 4-hour shooting window should be sufficient in most cases.

Stein had concerns that these calls are recorded and could be made public if requested. Chief Peterson explained that information would be redacted as that are done with other requests for information.

Murray had concerns with the department missing a legitimate call, if they chose not to send an officer out if they were aware of shooting. Chief Peterson explained that it is unlikely, and they would need to balance it based on the information given.

- **Fines**

If fines are clearly defined in the ordinance, and it is adopted, the Police Department would enforce what is outlined on the ordinance. It would then go through the town's finance department to pay the fines. If the fine recipient chose to appeal, it would be up to the Town Manager or Town Hall employees to deal with the appeal process. Chief Peterson stated he would look into what the animal control officer does in terms of issuing ordinance violations.

If the fine was not paid, the Town would also handle that as well. It is possible that a lien could be placed on a person's property if they did not pay their ordinance violation fines. Additionally, the ordinance can state they could lose their range permit with the town if they fail to pay.

Roberson felt it would be helpful to have a citation process, so that individuals pay for the permits they need. The Town Manager would need to be consulted with this, further.

Chief Peterson explained that unless someone is displaying dangerous behavior, the 1st visit would result in a verbal warning.

4. Draft of Firearms Ordinance:

Chief Peterson noted that he reviewed the draft ordinance put together by Taylor and felt it was good and would be able to help the department with complaints.

Chief Peterson noted that the biggest issue with home shooting ranges/shooting firearms in town, is noise. The noise is related to distance, but geographical layout as well. If the land is an open field with no trees, the sound will carry regardless of the distance the shooting is from neighboring properties.

An ordinance will not eliminate all issues but having something will help, especially in terms of safety. Each instance or situation will have its own challenges, whether it is noise, distance, duration, etc.

Chief Peterson suggested the draft ordinance add in the animal control officer under Sec. 66-79 Exceptions, subsection a).

*Sec. 66-79 Exceptions The restrictions within this Sec. 66 Article III shall not be construed to apply in the following circumstances: a)
The use of a Firearm or Air Gun by a police officer or animal control officer acting within the scope of their official duties;*

The committee discussed the permit process for historical reenactments, which was suggested to be the same for special events. Taylor explained that this wording was included due to recommendation from the Town Manager.

Taylor read the draft ordinance, for committee review. He noted that this is just the 1st draft, and all content is subject to change based on committee suggestions and legal consult.

Edits to draft:

- Change section that includes shooting across the road, to include trails.
 - This is already illegal and would result in criminal charges.
 - This adds clarity, especially for hunting purposes.
- Clarify shooting at backstop, not above it
- Consider shooting clays
 - Police Chief Peterson explained he has not received any calls about this. However, if they did receive a call and upon inspection it was unsafe, they would have authority to have them stop.
 - Could be included as an exception
- Add nail guns or air guns used for construction purposes in exceptions.
- Change start time to 9 AM to not be too restricted. This start time is commonly accepted.
- Clarify definition of “adequately trained in firearms”, should a Range Safety Officer (RSO) be included.
- Add a subsection for definition of a Commercial Shooting Range/Private Gun Club to have them legally recognized as an organization.
 - Include interior ranges.
- Remove stationary target, leaving inanimate target. This allows “moving” targets like spinners but excludes hunting.
- Under Sec. 66-77 Safety Requirements, item f) clarify that the instructor is to have approval from the parent or legal guardian.
- Under Sec. 66-78 Time Requirements, include a tentative 4-hour window for shooting duration.

5. Discussion of Future Agendas/Citizen Feedback:

It was discussed that there are individuals who have a desire to provide input to the committee. Input can be received in the form of emails, or in-person forum. The committee discussed having community feedback during a regularly scheduled meeting or holding a special meeting. Murray noted that their regularly scheduled meetings could have an audience of citizens as well. He also stated that this stage, it would not be a back and forth but rather receive questions, comments, and concerns.

The committee will review and refine the draft ordinance at the April 17th meeting. Then a presentation of the refined draft ordinance and public comment can happen at a future meeting. Once feedback is received, the feedback will be incorporated into a final draft of the ordinance as it applies. Once a meeting place is reserved, and date is confirmed, the meeting information can be shared on the Town Manager’s Facebook Page, town website, and the Town Manager’s monthly update.

A draft presentation will also be put together for review at the next meeting. This presentation from the committee should prelude public feedback to showcase the work the committee has done, show how they got to the draft ordinance, and set the tone for the rest of the meeting and public feedback.

It was suggested that the presentation include safety tips that the committee has discussed previously.

6. Other Business:

It was noted that consideration to appoint a new member to the committee is on the next steering agenda, and it is likely that the committee will have a replacement member by next meeting. Once a replacement member has been appointed, the committee elect a vice-chairperson.

The committee also needs to start thinking about whether the life of the committee needs to be extended prior to the Town Council's June meeting so they can act on extending the committee if needed. This will be added to the next agenda.

7. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 9:05 PM.

Submitted by,

Nicole Archambault

Nicole Archambault

Minutes Clerk

PLEASE NOTE: These minutes are not official until approved by the Committee at the next meeting. Please see the next Committee meeting minutes for approval or changes.