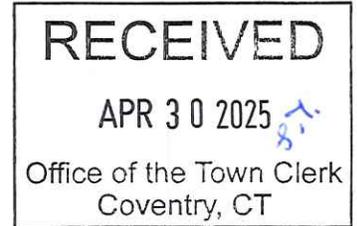


**Town of Coventry
Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday April 17, 2025**



1. Call To Order, Roll Call:

By: Murray Time: 6:37 p.m. Place: Conference Room B & Zoom

		PRESENT	ABSENT
REGULAR MEMBERS:	Brian Murray, Chairperson	X	
	Kenneth Stein, Vice Chairperson	X	
	Dudley Brand	X	
	Mike Mangiafico	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.

2. Approval Of Minutes:

A. Minutes, March 20, 2025:

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

By: Stein Second: Brand

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimously in favor

3. Draft of Firearms Ordinance:

The corrected version of the draft, and a version with highlighted changes was reviewed by the committee.

Taylor addressed concerns and changes made from last meeting:

1. Commercial shooting ranges/gun club definition implied that a range safety officer would be needed at all times. He informed that this was not required and changed the ordinance to state that individuals discharging firearms are to be adequately trained in firearms safety.
2. Since not all shooting targets are stationary (i.e. spinning targets), the term stationary target was changed to inanimate object. This will also be changed in Sec. 66-77 Safety Requirements, sub-section e.
3. "Public trails" was added to Sec. 66-77 Safety Requirements, sub-section d, to be included alongside public roads as an area that shooters are prohibited to fire across.
4. Supervision for minors under the age of 18 was changed to "another adult with the approval of their parent or legal guardian." from an adequately trained firearms instructor. (Applies if the parent/legal guardian is not the supervisor.)
5. Start time for firearms discharge was moved to 9AM from 10AM. Also, language was added to make the sunset time more defined.
6. A 4-hour shooting time window was included with the requirement of calling the Police Department for notice of recreational shooting activities.
7. Animal Control Officer was added an exempted person.
8. Construction equipment that may classify as a firearm or air gun, like a nail gun, were added under exemptions.

Discussion:

Jana noted that an email was received from a resident. She informed the resident that it would be shared with the committee for review. She explained that she would like to let people know moving forward when the committee will be accepting public comments, if they choose to do so as well as the strategy for such.

Stein had concerns with Section b) of the Commercial Shooting Range/Private Gun Club, which states:

"Said shooting range is approved by the Chief of Police and in compliance with all federal, state, and local laws;"

He added that Coventry PD currently shoots at one of the ranges in town, which should be a clear indicator that the range is approved. He suggested the language be simplified to a duly authorized/organized Commercial Shooting Range/Private Gun Club, as a way to separate it from a home shooting range.

Roberson was going to look into the zoning regulations for the development of a new gun club, should that be a route someone looks to take in the future. She noted that she believes a new one would not be allowed per the existing zoning regulations, and the 2 ranges/clubs currently in town are grandfathered in. Changing the language was discussed and agreed that it would make the most sense to list the 2 existing clubs/ranges to exempt them from this draft ordinance. Taylor noted that the language he used was to try and eliminate the need of editing this ordinance in the future, for whatever scenario arose.

The committee wanted to make sure that they do not encourage restrictions on future legal uses but want to do what they can to address the issues that have led to the formation and need of this committee. Fines for violations were discussed. Taylor explained that a monetary amount of \$100 per instance would be listed in

the ordinance, which can be used for enforcement, but ultimately the severity of the enforcement would be up to the responding officer(s).

Roberson reminded that this ordinance has been drafted carefully to not be too restrictive. She added that there is a wellness/quality of life aspect for residents who are affected by frequent and noisy shooting. The restrictions discussed, like time frames and shooting windows will help address the intensity of shooting. Mangiafico was concerned how an ordinance like this would impact those who are not used to having to do these things (i.e. call before shooting). He felt there may be push back from certain residents who have the land and do not want to be told what to do on their property. Taylor noted that this is mainly to address extreme cases which are causing disruptions, but it is a fine balance. Taylor also stated that having the ordinance makes disruptive behavior enforceable by the police, in cases where it wasn't enforceable previously. Stein also reminded that this isn't a gun issue, it's a good neighbor issue. This is why the police need something to refer to and measure complaints to when responding to calls.

Mangiafico suggested informing those residents who have been the source of complaints that they should be aware of what is coming, and that with an ordinance the behavior is more enforceable. He also wanted to make sure there was going to be public discussion. The committee noted that this has been discussed and being worked on and wants to have a meeting with public comment.

The committee discussed being a good neighbor, and the simple act of speaking with one's neighbor. It was also stated that there are situations where this does not work for fear of one's safety or the possibility of increased conflict or hostility.

Murray brought up a complaint that was received that was escalated to state level and referred to the Chief State Attorney. He was curious to what they would define as too close, and how a situation is escalated to a state level over a local ordinance. Taylor is going to reach out to see if the state's attorney can provide any guidance.

The committee discussed the different types of police reports came in, what was the concern, and when it happened. It was reminded all things reviewed and worked on by the committee are available to the public.

Taylor asked if there were any other concerns with the draft ordinance as presented. Stein expressed concerns surrounding the inclusion of needing to permit historical reenactment. Taylor noted that it is for people who would try and get around the restrictions of the ordinance by classifying themselves as a reenactment. He explained that how far the committee wants to cover potential situations, or not, is up to them. Roberson reminded that the language states, "authorized" historical reenactment. It was decided to leave "authorized historical reenactments" but strike the language stating a permit from the town would need to be obtained.

Stein suggested including language to ensure those who call in regarding their intent to shoot, that their information will be kept confidential. He felt the state statute could be included to back up the confidentiality.

The committee discussed the scenario of there being ush back to the point of non-conformity. Murray noted that this is a challenge to make sure they have the support of the community, and they put something forth that is responsible to the entire community.

4. Discussion of Shooting Range Safety Informational Presentation:

Stein explained that he put together a Power Point presentation on safety that pulled information directly from the State and the NRA Pistol Permit Training Curriculum. He explained that he wanted this safety presentation to be included with a larger presentation of what the committee has done, and how they got to where they are.

Roberson explained that there has been expressed desire to have a public meeting to provide education, what the committee has done, along with receiving public comment. When that happens, she felt this Power Point is a good length to provide safety education at either the start or conclusion of that meeting. She encouraged the committee to start thinking about how they want to coordinate this event.

Mangiafico felt it was important to explain to the community why this committee was organized, why they are studying the things they are studying, and all the work that has been done to get to this point. The committee agreed and wanted to dispel the rumors that were being spread on Facebook. The importance of spreading firearms safety knowledge to the community was noted.

Roberson reminded that the committee still needs to report to the Town Council. She informed that the charge of the committee does not include hosting a public meeting. She felt that the committee should meet with and update the Town Council on their discussions and recommendations first. She explained that their desire to have a firearms safety educational presentation, as well as presenting the reasoning behind their recommendations to the community should be expressed. She also informed that if an ordinance were their recommendation, it would need to be approved by the Town Council, which comes with a required public comment section. She felt that the Town Council would be more than happy to have the committee's participation on this.

5. Discussion of Future Agendas/Citizen Feedback:

Stein raised concerns that should the committee recommend an ordinance, what do they do if during public comment, the majority of public feedback is against it. If it does not get passed, they are back at square 1.

Taylor reminded that per their charge, there are only 3 meetings left to address things that have been discussed. He noted that it would be good to touch base with the Town Council and see if they want to seek an extension of the committee term since they are running tight on time.

It was noted that receiving public feedback would help finalize a draft ordinance to present. Roberson reiterated that if the Town Council adopted an ordinance, it would require public comment.

The committee discussed meeting with the Town Council, and a short presentation to reference back to the initial issues. Taylor suggested that the goal for next meeting should be getting final information from Police Chief Peterson and refining a presentation to the Town Council.

Roberson outlined a potential presentation: (subject to change)

1. How the committee got started and the issues.
2. The Committee's Charge.
3. The Committee's timeline, breakdown of discussions, and considered factors
4. Proposed draft ordinance.

She reminded that this can be done by PowerPoint presentation or written report.

Murray stated that he wants to make sure that it is understood that they are trying to address the outcomes of the situations that were brought to them, not restrict residents for the sake of restricting. It was reminded that the ordinance gives the Police Department a tool that is on the books. Stein also noted that Tolland has had an ordinance for similar issues, and it is very rarely used. Brand added that having a distance requirement should solve a lot of issues.

Roberson felt that the next steps were to update the Town Council and move forward at their discretion. There was consensus to develop a presentation for the Town Council that outlines the issues that they are trying to address, the work they have done, their recommendations, and desire for public feedback. This will be the focus of the next meeting. Additionally, there were still some uncertainties with the ordinance that some members wanted feedback from the Police Chief on.

The presentation will be worked on for the next meeting (May 17th), along with the edits to the draft ordinance. Both will be reviewed and finalized at the May meeting to be brought to the Town Council at their 1st meeting in June if they are ready. Taylor will confirm whether or not this needs to go to Steering 1st. Stein questioned a review from an attorney. It was explained that this would be done after the Town Council review, and Taylor noted that the ordinance language was pulled from other existing ordinances. He did not feel there will be anything problematic with the ordinance draft.

Roberson noted that there will be next steps after presenting to the Town Council, but she is unsure of what that is. If the Town Council wants the committee to continue to be involved, or work on anything further, they can extend the Committee's charge. However, reporting and presenting to the Town Council their recommendation in June or July has met the obligation of their charge. The committee can express their desire to be a part of the public comment portion, if the ordinance is moved forward, as well as the desire to hold an educational presentation.

Murray suggested that once the draft ordinance is finalized, it be reviewed by Chief Peterson to confirm its enforceability.

The committee also noted that this ordinance will not solve all problems, as there are things that can't be solved. Not everyone is going to like it. However, it goes both ways where the police can use it as a guideline to enforce a violation from it or dismiss complaints when individuals are following it.

6. Election of Officers: Vice Chair:

It was reminded that this agenda item was postponed until the committee had their vacant seat filled.

Murray opened the floor to nominations:

Brand nominated Stein to fill the seat of Vice Chair, Murray seconded. Nominations were closed.

Motion: I move to appoint Ken Stein to the position of Vice Chair of the Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee.

By: Brand

Second: Murray

Discussion: Stein explained that he appreciates the nomination and reminded that there may be a rare instance where he needs to attend the meeting via zoom due to his occupation.

Vote: Unanimously in favor

7. Other Business:

Murray explained that they received an email from a citizen, William Glenney, which was reviewed and will be included at the conclusion of these minutes.

The committee is not formally accepting public feedback, but Roberson wanted to notify the committee that an email was received.

8. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 8:56 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.