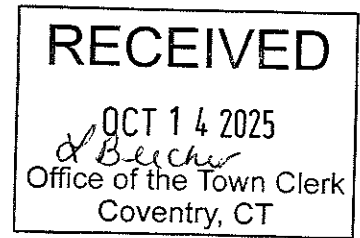


Town of Coventry
Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 30, 2025



1. Call To Order, Roll Call:

By: Murray

Time: 6:33 p.m.

Place: Town Hall Annex

		PRESENT	ABSENT
REGULAR MEMBERS:	Brian Murray, Chairperson	X	
	Kenneth Stein, Vice Chairperson	X	
	Dudley Brand	X	
	Mike Mangiafico	X	
	Vacancy		
STAFF:	Jana Roberson, Director of Planning & Dev't.	X	
	Chief of Police Eric Peterson	X	

Also present: Special Projects Coordinator Alex Taylor and Town Manager James Drumm.

2. Approval Of Minutes:

A. Minutes, September 18, 2025:

Motion: I move to accept the September 18, 2025, Firearms Safety/Home Shooting Range Study Committee Meeting Minutes.

By: Stein

Second: Brand

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimously in favor

3. Review of Public Comment Feedback:

Murray reminded that there is email correspondence as well as the spoken feedback. Taylor commented that there is a new email, but it is from one of the speakers from the public comment, who sent her written statement. Taylor added that all comments spoken during Public Comment are included summarized in the minutes as well.

It was felt that no further review of comments made or submitted was necessary at this time, as the Committee has already reviewed them.

4. Draft of Firearms Ordinance:

The current draft was reviewed and is the same draft that the public made comment on. This draft is on the town's website and has been available for some time.

Stein felt that with the several comments that were made during public comment, it was clear that many did not actually read the ordinance or understand it. For example, there were concerns that nail guns would not be able to be used, when those were specifically included in the exemptions.

Roberson discussed that definitions are included at the beginning of the draft as firearms and air guns are different terms that are not treated identically.

Murray explained that there seemed to be a lot of misinformation shared during the meeting, and he wants to clear that up along with addressing common themes that were brought up in relation to the ordinance. Murray noted that one of the biggest pieces of misinformation, was that someone stated that if they were cited for a violation of this ordinance, they would not be able to buy a gun, which is false.

It was discussed whether or not a nail gun should even be included in the ordinance, even under exemptions. Stein noted according to the NRA, gun safety is gun safety, whether a gun is powered by gun powder or air. Both definitions of Firearm and Air Gun are included in the ordinance. Stein understood that Murray wasn't specifically talking about safety, but rather should it be included in regulations. He reminded that noise hasn't been an issue with air guns, nor are there noise restrictions for air guns in the NRA handbook.

Murray was curious if there was anything they could do to clarify the ordinance for BB guns, as there was a resident concerned the ordinance would prohibit BB gun use. Stein stated that he feels that the resident did not read the ordinance. Roberson commented that the way the definitions are written, are not attempting to list every kind of gun, as they never could. Roberson felt that it was clear which sections included Firearms and Air Guns or just Firearms. She reminded that you are not required to call the Police Department when using an Air Gun, and it can be used any time day or night. Taylor added that Section 66-77, subsection f, does not include Air Guns as well.

Mangiafico felt that the Ordinance needs to be written as simple as possible. He felt tensions were high, and a lot of people did not understand the purpose of this Committee and felt they were going to be losing rights. Additionally, the public comment turned into a courtroom battle between the 2 Riley Mountain neighbors. Mangiafico also stated that most people gave their opinions, which they are entitled to, rather than quality feedback on the ordinance.

Murray discussed that he was able to pull from multiple comments that it seemed like most people had a problem with the 300 ft distance requirement, but were ok with 250 ft. Murray also added that it seemed like a definition of "range" needs to be clarified or added to know where the distance requirement applies. The discussion continued that the distance from shooting to backstop needs to be considered in the distance, along with the distance from occupied structures. Stein stressed that a shooter should look 180 degrees from where they are shooting and not having anything in sight. Stein added that 350 feet will also help with the noise.

Mangiafico did not believe that 100 feet would make a large difference in terms of noise. Stein disagreed, as distance plays a big factor in reducing decibels. However, environmental factors contribute to the amount of noise as well.

Taylor stated that as written, the ordinance identifies the starting point of distance from where the gun is being fired. He asked if there should be language that clarifies requirements for spacing and measurement of the backstop as well. He cautioned that this may be difficult.

Roberson was curious if the NRA range manual clearly defines range. Stein stated he is not sure but will look it up. He did note that the manual states that a backstop should be sufficient to contain the round a shooter is intending to use. He also noted that during public comment, there were quite a few comments where people complained that there were no guidelines for appropriate backstops. The Committee purposefully left it vague as each situation and materials required differ.

Roberson agreed and stated that things can be defined spatially without measurements. Roberson also made a point that she heard several comments at the public comment that there is nothing in the ordinance about safety. She reminded that every discussion surrounded safety when examining the issues. However, the ordinance cannot simply read "Make everything safe". She reminded the purpose of the regulation, which is clearly stated at the top is the safety and wellbeing of Coventry residents.

Roberson, going back to the original point, wanted to make sure that the distance, whatever it shall be, has a clear starting point, and what is included in that distance.

Murray explained that property lines should be considered as well. He reminded that Planning and Zoning regulates all sorts of things from property lines, and that this should be especially considered with a Home Shooting Range. He stated that an individual should know their property lines if setting up a home shooting range. He commented that he would be in support of a decreased distance, if it was a set distance away from the property lines. Murray suggested a distance of 250 ft from the point of shooting, away from an occupied structure or dwelling, and 50 ft off the property line.

Brand discussed that there could be a lot of things that go into the shooting range, and it's different than building a shed off a property line. He commented that this could get complicated. Mangiafico reiterated that they need to avoid complicated and keep things simple.

Taylor shared that there seems to be a few questions floating around, that need to be addressed:

1. Where is the origin of the 350 ft starting from?
2. Should there be a required distance from a property line?
3. Should the required minimum distance of 350 ft be modified?

Roberson clarified another point of information, that the distance requirement does not apply to one's own house/property, or if there is written permission from the owner should the shooter not be the owner of the home/property.

Chief Peterson explained that if there was ever a situation where an individual was firing in the direction of someone's home, that would constitute as reckless. The same would apply if there was a home on the other

side of an established berm. Chief Peterson reminded that there are too many instances where common sense is out the window.

Roberson felt that the ordinance clarifies that the origin of the distance requirement is from the point of shooting, based on the language in the ordinance. The language states "Persons wishing to engage in recreational shooting, must do so at a distance greater than 350 ft." It was agreed that the "do so" refers to the act of shooting/firing line.

Murray questioned if the noise portion should even be included in this ordinance, or if a noise ordinance should be recommended to the Town Council. Stein stated that wellbeing was a part of the Committee's charge, which includes the intensity of noise. Taylor pointed out that even if somethings are the same decibel of noise, it makes a difference what the source of the noise is. He compared starting a lawn mower to a low powered firearm, which matters due to the connotation surrounding those 2 things. Stein agreed and reminded that the Committee spoke on that topic. Taylor shared that the committee may recommend to the Town Council that a noise ordinance be created as well as the firearms safety/home shooting range ordinance. Murray reminded that Tolland has a quiet hour from 10 PM to 7 AM, every day.

Drumm cautioned that elaborating on allowed decibels would put in place too many restrictions. Murray understood but wanted to make sure that if they put a distance of 350 ft in the ordinance, that it is going to solve the issues. Stein reminded that each situation is different, and it depends on who is making the complaint.

Taylor suggested changing the language of the ordinance to state that a person may not discharge a firearm within 350ft of an occupied structure. This clarifies that the distance starts from where the firing is occurring, and not the whole range area. He further added that the back stop location and distance is clarified in a different section of the ordinance and can be included under the distance requirements as well.

Roberson questioned the purpose of the backstop and stated that she is under the impression it is supposed to stop the projectiles. Stein stated it should, if it built correctly. However, if built incorrectly, it could fail. He also commented that he has seen a person pop up on the top of a berm that was live and placed in the woods. He cautioned with berms in the woods, as a person could be hiking in the woods and unaware of a live range, especially if it is a home shooting range, and not a commercial range. Roberson stated that it seems that people should not be behind the backstop as it is unsafe. Stein stated that nothing is 100% and suggested that if a backstop is in the woods, signage should be placed behind it.

The committee discussed that if a person was firing without a backstop, that it would be a bigger issue of reckless endangerment for the Police Department to get involved. Chief Peterson agreed, and stated when someone sets up a home range, the first thing that the PD will look at is the direction of where the bullet may be traveling and what is around. He reminded that they can only go investigate when they receive a call/complaint. Based on what they find, they can do what they can to correct the situation.

The Committee discussed reducing the distance. Brand felt that it should remain at 350ft. Stein shared concerns that maybe the distance would not increase or decrease safety if it was reduced, but it would certainly affect noise. He felt that if it was left at 350 ft, there will be people who complain about the distance. Murray stated that Tolland uses 250 ft, and their Town Manager has publicly stated that it has never had to be

enforced. Stein added that having the ordinance as a framework is a large contributor to why it has never had to be enforced. Murray agreed and stated that it is not something people should be afraid of. Having this ordinance would be a tool to use and is not something that would be enforced on a daily basis.

Roberson commented to have a minimum distance of 350ft from structures, in all directions, a person would need over 8 acres of land. However, this only applies if there are structures in either direction. If firing into the woods, or direction of woods, then the distance requirement would not apply.

Murray and Mangiafico were OK with 250 ft. Stein had pros and cons either way. Chief Peterson was asked his thoughts. Chief Peterson explained that in terms of the 2 distances, and safety, it would not matter. It would matter if the shooter was being reckless or dangerous. The difference between 250 ft and 350 ft is a quality-of-life issue. Chief Peterson reminded that regardless of the distance, having a written distance will help the PD be able to do something when responding to calls, if need be.

Mangiafico explained that if this ordinance gets adopted, the only time there will be an issue is when 2 people can't get along. He reminded that there have not been any injuries in town due to home shooting ranges. The only time there was an issue was during a hunting situation, which was greater than 500 ft. He reminded that if neighbors can't get along, if the distance was 1,000 feet it wouldn't matter.

Stein reminded that there were a lot of complaints from the 2 neighbors who could not get along regarding the 350 ft distance. He also reminded that the Committee has spent many months reviewing issues unrelated to the Riley Mountain neighbors. Chief Peterson has explained to the Committee that there are issues in other areas of town. Mangiafico agreed and commented that one of the most vocal persons at the meeting lives in the lake community where shooting isn't allowed anyways.

Stein stated that changing the distance from 350ft to 250ft would increase the noise. He questioned if this was an agreeable change. Brand also commented that a 250 ft minimum distance requirement would allow for some people in the lake community to have a home shooting range, as they would meet that requirement.

Murray commented that he has 2 members for 250 ft, 1 member for 300 ft, and 1 member for 350 ft. Murray also stated that he is more than willing to have another public comment, as the 1st public comment did not provide feedback on the ordinance as requested or speak for or against the distance outside of airing grievances.

Roberson also reminded everyone to keep in mind that the parcels of land take on many shapes and sizes, as do their surrounding properties.

The committee rediscussed reducing the minimum required distance to 250 ft, as long as the home shooting range is 50 ft off the property line. Roberson commented that they tell people they need to build their deck off the property line, it would make sense to do the same for a home shooting range. Stein shared that if the goal is to make the ordinance simpler, this is the wrong direction.

Stein also added that there were comments that the town cannot tell you what to do on your own property but reminded that a person cannot build on their property without permits. Roberson agreed and noted that there were comments that this should be handled through zoning. She reminded that this was discussed in the

past, and that it would grandfather ranges already in place, which is not appropriate for this issue as it would not address existing situations. She also added that the Zoning Enforcement Officer is not the person to be responding to calls or investigating ranges in violation of a home shooting range ordinance. They are not trained for that type of situation, and it would be best suited for the police to respond for a variety of reasons.

Taylor shared that the distance will always be on a sliding scale, and there will be pros and cons to each distance. However, the ordinance will not please everyone. He reminded that they shied away from using property lines in the past as it could be difficult to verify and could lead to further disputes. Chief Peteson explained that a responding officer is not going to confirm the exact property line, it will be an approximation. Stein reminded that a similar scenario regarding disputes with property lines played out already in the cases they reviewed.

Motion: I move to change the minimum required distance from point of discharge to 250 ft from 350 ft.

By: Murray

Second: Mangiafico

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimously in favor

Motion: I move for a 50 ft setback from the property line for the placement of a home shooting range.

By: Brand

Second: Mangiafico

Discussion: Stein stated he understands why this is being considered but feels that it makes things more complicated when the goal was to make the ordinance simpler and clearer. Murray commented that it allows for a buffer, especially with large lots.

Voting:

For: Murray, Mangiafico, and Brand

Opposed: None

Abstain: Stein

Taylor stated that they have answered most questions about distance generated by public comment and was curious if there were any other modifications they felt were needed.

Murray brought up the fact that there was a concern when a recreational shooter calls the PD to notify they will be shooting and there is no official record of the call. Chief Peterson noted that it would be noted what time the call came in to start the 4-hour window and eliminate unnecessary policing. He reminded that the goal is to use the ordinance as a guideline not strict enforcement or issuing infractions. He also stated that if there is a case where enforcement is needed, it will likely be well past the 4-hour window. Chief Peterson also reminded that the calls are recorded and are kept for approximately 90 days.

Taylor reminded that paintball was previously mentioned and felt that this could be added as an exception should the committee agree, which they did.

Stein wanted to make a point that there was a gentleman who spoke and stated the ordinance as it is currently written would not pass a legal review. Stein reminded that this was reviewed by the Town's Attorney who found no issues. He also stated that the same citizen had an issue with the restriction of secondary action targets, as it would prohibit the use of steel targets, as the bullet bouncing off the target is a secondary action. Stein explained that this is completely untrue, as the bullet hitting the steel target is stopping its forward motion, and falling to the ground, which is gravity. He stated that everyone is entitled to their opinion, but some of the comments made were not factual.

5. Discussion and Planning of Future Meetings:

Murray explained that he is more than willing to allow for a 2nd public comment to allow for more appropriate feedback on the ordinance. Taylor explained that this is fine but cautioned at the Committee's charge expires December 1st. He also reminded that he could keep the email open to receive written comment that way as well. Roberson reminded that if the Town Council moves forward with adopting the ordinance, there will be a public hearing.

Stein added that with them nearing the end of their charge, whatever needs to get done following a public comment at the October 16th meeting, will need to be done at the November meeting, as it will be their last. Taylor explained that this means that a presentation from the committee and a draft ordinance will need to be finalized at the November 20th meeting. He reminded that a special meeting could be held again, if needed.

6. Other Business:

Taylor summarized the changes discussed and to be made to the current draft for next meeting:

- Section 66-77, Subsection C:
 - to read: "A person wishing to discharge a firearm must do so at a distance greater than 250 ft."
 - This is a change from 350 ft
 - Language will be added to include a 50 ft setback from the property line
- Section 66-79
 - Paintball will be included as an exception

The October 16th regularly scheduled meeting will be at 6:30 PM in the Annex, with a public comment segment to be advertised. The feedback@Coventry-CT.gov will remain open, and any emails received will be added as content to the next meeting agenda.

7. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 8:30 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.