

Town Of Ipswich
Massachusetts

Article 20 Committee
Meeting on Thursday September 22, 2016
Ipswich Town Hall, 25 Green Street

Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L.Chapter 30A , 18-25, written and posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of Article 20 Committee was held on Thursday, September 22, 2016 at 7 pm in Cafeteria Conference Room at 7 pm

Eric Josephson, Bob Weatherall, Tammy Howe Psy. D, William Craft , Susan Boreri MD and Fred Winthrop

Bob Weatherall called the meeting to order at 711 pm

Citizens Inquires

David Warner 20 Topsfield Road “ where in the process is the committee?”

Bob Weatherhall- We have a mandate to report to the Selectman and Fin Com on our recommendations whether to regulate back yard shooting ranges. We hope to produce a document prior to the Town Meeting. Broadly, we have come up with a set of guidelines for the Chief of police to help him better oversee backyard shooting ranges. The details are a work in progress. The State regulations are ‘loose’ and we feel that the Chief “needs more tools” in order to dictate safe firearm shooting on private property

Tammy Howe- We would like to see” safe shooting practices in general “if someone wants to shoot in their back yard

Toby Perkins 39 Mitchell road- “We have laws in place now where and when you can shoot, why do we need more”

Tammy Howe- discussed current states laws and added that the Chief needs guidelines and the committee has looked at current NRA recommendations such as berms, backstops and line of shooting in order to establish a safe environment for the shooter as well as the general public.

Bob Weatherall-Our job is only to recommend to the town guidelines. The Town needs to vote in order to change any current By Laws

Eric Josephson- This is not a mandate. We can recommend changes to the current laws or recommend no changes

Ed Rausher-The committee was established to recommend, or not recommend guidelines. These will become a public document on the town web site. These guidelines will then be discussed at the BOS and FiN Com meetings.

Bob Weatherall-Our process is only to report to the Town Meeting. No action will be taken.

Gilicky 35 Linebrook Road- Are these guidelines or recommendations. What is on the Town Website?

Bob Weatherall -We post the meeting minutes on the town website. You can view this meeting when Jen posts it. These guidelines will look at back yard shooting ranges and how we can minimize ricochets by establishing berms etc The police Chief feels we need a permit process to help establish safe backyard ranges. There will be no dialog tonight on the merit or recommendations of this proposal. There will be a time for public input, which is always appreciated, in the future.

Pat McNally 74 Littleneck Road- Is this conversation about all types of guns?

Steven German Linebrook Road “ I don’t understand why we are having this meeting as we have too much regulation as it is”

D. Casidy 109 Essex Road What are the credentials of the members of this committee in order for them to discuss these issues?

Members of the Committee then introduced themselves and gave their credentials

Churchill 8 Hurst St -Will these recommendations limit hunting on your property?

Fred Winthrop- These recommendations will not effect hunting. The subject is narrow and just focuses on shooting ranges. Some ranges are not established responsibly.

Peter Papas 51 Farley Ave- What's next Chainsaws? Everything is over regulated

Colin 354 Linebrook Road -What remedy do we have if we disagree with the Chief?

Perkins 39 Mitchell Road-Does the Chief have to come on our property? He doesn't have the right to come on our property

Tammy Howe- the Chief and police need to investigate all incidents of shooting. These guidelines will ultimately help the police

Bob Weatherall-These are all issues that will be discussed at the next meeting when Chief Nikas is present

Peter Papas 51 Farley Ave- This has nothing to do with anything. This started because my son was shooting on our property and the good Doctor didn't like it. The Police came and checked everything out twice and didn't find anything. They didn't even give us a citation. This is a vendeta

Ed Raucher-This committee was established to look at the facts and recommend to the town whether we need to take any action or not. That is why it was established. It is not personal

Bob Weatherall-No vote has been taken. No decisions have been made. We are looking at establishing guidelines for the safely of both the shooter and the general public. There is potential that certain properties may not be suitable for a backyard shooting ranges or be suitable for certain weapons

Robert Wade 90 Turnpike Road- Are their guidelines that the Chief will use? Will he recommend specific changes?

Tom Lewis 23 Popular Street-Will We need a building permit?

Bob Weatherall-I don't know. I will refer that question to the building Dept

Thistle 12 Carriage Drive- "If we hunt will we need an established shooting range"

Bob Weatherall No hunting has its own regulations. This is only for target shooting

Shaughnessy 31 Fairview Ave. This question is for Eric. Do you feel this committee is fair and represents gun owners. And what percentage of this committee owns guns?

Eric Josephson- I feel it does not represent gun owners

Bob Weatherall-I resent that comment. This committee is well represented by both sides. We have worked hard all summer and have discussed many topics, based our recommendations on NRA guidelines and have worked hard to represent all the citizens of Ipswich, including gun owners. Just so you know 4/7 members are gun owners.

Show of hands on the committee who owns guns, 4/7 and who agrees that a citizen should be allowed to shoot on their property 7/7

Bob Craft-We are not experts. Perhaps the town should look at hiring some experts to look at this matter. But we can make intelligent comments and establish some guidelines based on our backgrounds

Gregory-30 Linebrook Road When will the town vote on this?

Tammy Howe-The process is evolving. We are gathering information. There will be no vote at the next town meeting

Jenny 202 High Street-What do we do in the mean time?

Bob Weatherall Nothing changes right now. These guidelines will help the police not respond to gun noise if it is coming from a safe shooting range.

Joe Dixon 10 Pill Lane-Can we vote to discontinue this committee?

Bob Weatherall-No. This committee was established by a vote at the town meeting. It will give its report to the BOS and Fin

Com. A sub committee may be established by vote to look into this further. That is to be determined

Craft-The Town will vote when and if recommendations are brought. We will recommend to the Town that some regulations or guidelines are needed. We want the citizens to participate in this process

Shannon 4 Mt Pleasant Street -Can the citizens stop these meetings?

Bill Craft- No. You can vote not to establish any more committees at the town meeting.

Jeff Brown 19 Birch lane -Will you recommend in your report to establish another committee?

Bob Weatherall-We haven't discussed it yet

Bill Craft-I respect all the members of this committee. We have had candid discussions about what is best for Ipswich.

Tom Lewis 23 Popular Street -This is not a responsible solution. You are infringing on my Second Amendment rights. You are after one person and not acting on what is responsible

Bob Weatherall-The Chief wants clear guidelines and that is what we are working at. We are trying to balance what is good for the shooters and the non shooters.

Ann Josephson 6 Pine Street-Will the Chief charge a fee for the permit?

Bob Weatherall-No committee member supports a fee

Charles Shawnasey 31 Fairview road What if you have a hostile neighbor and they want to go after you because you are a gun owner? Will noise be an issue?

Rich Gillicky Linebrook Road- What if your backstop is an eye sore for your neighbors?

Bob Weatherall -These issues have not been discussed. We will now close the Citizen Inquiry. You are welcome to stay for the meeting but you can not ask any questions.

Citizen Inquiry was closed at 825 PM

Meeting was started at 827 PM

Eric Josephson Can we discuss Chief Nikas's draft? I am opposed to much of it. We do not need a rigid permit system. We should not have to call ahead to shoot. We need to "push back" to avoid further restrictions

Tammy Howe It is a template. We can edit it. We can use the checklist as a guideline.

Bob Weatherall-it is not a mandate to use the checklist as is.

Susan Boreri Maybe we can go through the checklist line by line and discuss each item to see what exactly you are opposed to.

Bill Craft-Lets use it as a resource

The Committee then discussed each item at a time. Eric Josephson said items #1,2,3,4,5 and 6 were acceptable as written. Item #7 he objected to its wording.

Eric Josephson "Targets should be appropriate for the caliber of the firearm, pistol, rifle or shotgun used."

Bill Craft-I though we discussed using targets specially designed for shooting to avoid ricochet.

Eric Josephson Eric then discussed with the committee why certain common items like a hard drive make a great target. Committee then agreed to change to the above wording suggested by Mr Josephson for #7 and leave it up to the Chief to determine if the targets are appropriate.

Susan Boreri made a motion to revise #7, add a preamble and present our findings to the appropriate Town committees

Fred Winthrop - Is the Chief the right person to inspect and enforce these guidelines?

Susan Boreri He is the Town safety officer, a certified firearms instructor and has the knowledge to determine if the range is safe for the shooter and public.

The Committee then agreed he was the best person to inspect and certify the backyard shooting ranges.

Eric Josephson I am opposed to mandatory inspections and the Chief should only get involved when there is an issue

Fred Winthrop Will The Chief need to inspect a property if it is only used for an occasional target practice?

Bill Craft It is the occasional shooter that scares me the most. All ranges must be inspected. You may hunt on your person property under current hunting regulation, but shooting in ant other context you must follow the recommendations. Most gun owners act responsibly but we still need some recommendations.

Eric Josephson All gun owners should be responsible when they discharge their weapon. The preauthorization of their shooting range is offensive.

Tammy Howe- We need to balance protection for both sides, the shooter and the non shooter.

Eric Josephson- the occasional shooter should not be subject to these guidelines

Tammy Howe- You should not see this as punitive but more as a cooperative measure

Bob Weatherall- These guidelines should not be arbitrary.

The discussion ended and a vote was called by the Committee Chairman to recommend the guidelines with the revised #7 and to add a preamble at the next meeting. It was also decided that the Permit will be approved until and unless conditions change in lieu of a yearly inspection and any digressions would be left up to the Chief to re inspect. Fines for violations were not discussed. Draft of section 2, Discharge of Firearms Hunting , Trapping and Private Shooting Ranges was shelved until further discussions.

All in Favor : Tammy Howe, Bob Craft, BoB Weatherall, Susan Boreri,

Opposed: Eric Josephson and Fred Winthrop

Motion was passed 4-2

Tammy Howe-Please let the record reflect that there was a minority opinion that back yard shooting ranges should not be preapproved by inspection by the Chief of Police in Ipswich

Minutes for the August 25, 2016 meeting were also approved unanimously after a motion by Susan Boreri and a second by Tammy Howe

Next meeting will be October 13, 2016 to discuss the preamble and any other business

Mr. Craft motioned to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Josephson seconded it. Motion passed unanimously at 9:32 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Susan K. Boreri MD October 2, 2016