

Town Of Durham

Public Safety Committee

Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, December 9, 2008

Committee Members in Attendance:

Chairman, Frank DeFelice; Mal Pearce; Dan Murphy; and Wendy Manemeit

Absent:

Jim Rossi, Bill Smith

Chairman DeFelice called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

The November meeting was not held, therefore no minutes to approve.

The minutes from the October's meeting, was approved.

2009 Meeting Dates

Chairman DeFelice distributed the list of 2009 meeting dates. Discussion took place on possibly changing the meeting dates from the 2nd Tuesday of the month to the 1st Tuesday of the month. A motion was made by Dan Murphy and seconded by Wendy Manemeit to change the meeting date to the 1st Tuesday and was approved unanimously.

Citizens Concerns regarding stray projectiles

Chairman DeFelice opened up discussion to the committee and the many members of the public gathered at the meeting, to decide whether or not the Town of Durham – Public Safety Committee should endorse to the Board of Selectman, the services of an outside consultant to definitively determine the origin of the stray projectiles hitting homes in the Tri- Mountain Rd area.

Many homeowners spoke of bullets hitting their homes multiple times over the last several years.

Resident Melissa DiVito asked that we consider to change our description from “stray projectiles” to “bullets”. She said the homeowners have only found bullets, bullets holes and not anything or “projectile”.

Resident Ken DiVito described the numerous strikes to his house. He also commented that the CT State Police report indicated that it was *more than likely* the bullets were originating from the Blue Trail Range in Wallingford.

Resident Richard Dlugos described how his house has been hit several times over the last few years. One strike was 15 feet from where his family was swimming in the pool. He also mentioned that when the houses were hit 9 years ago, the Blue Trail Range in Wallingford agreed to install baffles and have shooters sign in a log. He believes the baffles may have been removed and is not sure if the log is still being used or even managed.

Committee Member Mal Pearce described and displayed a bullet that is typical of the range. He also detailed his experience on the Governor's Foot Guard and their use of a shooting area in East Haven.

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The East Haven location is in the middle of a residential area and has a number of safety provisions within its range site, per Mr. Pearce. He also described the use of very large telephone poles and a backstop.

Committee Member Wendy Manemeit asked the residents to all indicate if the bullet strikes were all on one side of their house or all sides. Every resident indicate that all bullet hits were on the west side of their properties.

Resident Donna Louisa said she had several hits to her home over the last few years, but more recently was on Memorial Day of this year. That bullet landed in her kitchen. A contractor working on her roof discovered several bullets imbedded in her roof. She expressed a strong desire for the committee to approve the new study.

Resident Seth Miller described the ridge and how one is able to scoop down and pick up handfuls of bullets from the ground. He also described the lead in the bullets leaving a green tinge on the mountainside. His family is very scared and doesn't want his family to be the ones to take one for the team.

Mr. Miller also feels there are many more strikes to homes and property that have gone unreported.

Selectman John Szewczyk described the State Police report as one looking for criminal activity. This new study would be different in the sense that it could hopefully definitively prove the source and then recommendations can be made to keep everyone safe and property undamaged.

Resident Ken Presky of Bailey Rd also described the damage to his property.

Member Mal Pearce described the scarring of trees on the ridge that he saw many years ago.

Chairman DeFelice passed out general specifications perimeters for the safety assessment consulting services, if approved.

After much discussion the following was agreed upon:

1. Determine the source of the bullets striking homes in Durham.
2. A Safety assessment of the Blue Trail Range
3. Determine the potential impact to property located in the Town of Durham
4. A plan of action to mitigate, reduce and /or eliminate adverse impact on property located in the Town of Durham.
5. Present to the Public Safety Committee and the Board of Selectman

The selection process of the entity would follow the procurement process set up by the Town of Durham.

Resident Donna Louisa wanted to be sure that the entity selected was ethical and not involved in a relationship with the Blue Trail Range. The committee assured her that the selection process will be fair.

Chairman DeFelice noted that he will be sure that the Finance Officer for the town to include a separate addendum to ensure the relationship of the chosen entity.

Chairman DeFelice also noted that if for some reason the Board of Selectman do not approve the hiring of an outside consultant, the Public Safety committee will continue to take this matter seriously and do every they can to help.

It was noted by a resident that in his research he could not find a community in the entire United States that has had bullet strikes like the residents of Durham have had to endure. He was appreciative of the Public Safety Committee and the Board of Selectman in their quest to keep its citizens safe.

Member Dan Murphy noted that he wants to be sure that the situation does not pit one town against another.

Member Mal Pearce would like a site visit to be included in the verbiage along with a GPS reading.

On a motion by Dan Murphy, and a second from Mal Pearce the committee unanimously approved to propose to the Board of Selectman, the hiring of a safety assessment consulting service to determine the source of the bullet strikes to homes in the Town of Durham.

Reducing cost of Police Protection – research

Chairman DeFelice passed out information compiled by a resident of Killingworth outlining the cost of police protection in various towns.

After much discussion, it was decided to table discussion on this matter until the entire committee can meet.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Sincerely,

Wendy Manemeit
Substitute recording secretary