

TOWN OF IPSWICH  
MASSACHUSETTS

Article 20 Committee  
Meeting of Thursday, August 18, 2016  
Ipswich Town Hall, 25 Green Street

Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Article 20 Committee was held on THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 2016 at 7 PM in Town Managers Conference Room

Eric Josephson, Chief Paul Nikas, Bob Weatherall, Tammy Howe Psy. D., Susan Boreri MD, and Fred Winthrop. William Craft was absent.

Bob Weatherall called the meeting to order at 7:08.

**Citizens Inquires**

None

**Discussion:**

- Dr. Boreri presented a packet of information on different existing restrictions from other Massachusetts towns.
- Dr. Boreri found information on town websites of their requirements, these were read through.
- There are very few guidelines but in the towns who post their bylaws online, the Chief is the enforcement.
- Dr. Howe wanted clear guidelines because if a Chief in town changes then the rules become more arbitrary.
- Dr. Boreri spoke with neighbors and they indicated that they would like to see the 500 ft. distance increased and make it larger around a school and a church.
- Mr. Josephson wanted to push on this, because he wasn't sure any lots in town would survive this scrutiny.
- Mr. Winthrop questioned if the 500-foot limit was a state law, and it was confirmed this was the case. He wasn't sure if towns could adjust this, since it was state law. The Chief confirmed that towns actually could adjust this.
- Mr. Weatherall said the state could establish a rule, but towns could enforce tighter rules. Towns cannot loosen the rules but can be stricter.
- Dr. Howe felt the committee felt before discussing changes the numbers the next step should be deterring what a safe range would look like. Before we get into changes we need to decide what would be acceptable and feasible for people who want to do target practice and those who want stricter rules.
- Mr. Josephson wanted to make a clear distinction between someone who has a backyard shooting range and someone who only occasionally discharges a weapon.
- Dr. Howe said they still should still meet guidelines, because neighbors may still call the Chief when they hear gunshots.
- Mr. Josephson just wants to make sure we do not require someone who shoots once a year to have to establish a range.

- Dr. Howe understands this, but still wants to make sure they are shooting into something appropriate. But what we need to figure out is what is appropriate.
- Dr. Howe said we could go back to this later, but once a person hits 21 years old and they can get a class A license and can supervise. She would like to consider that they cannot supervise a person until they have more than a day of having a license.
- Mr. Josephson said this is assuming they do not know what they are doing, and then treating them not as an adult.
- Dr. Howe said this rule seems loose to her, that someone without much experience could let someone shoot a gun in their presence. Some may have plenty of experience but some may be brand new to shooting.
- Mr. Josephson said we are limiting what an adult is allowed to do by setting this rule.
- Chief Nikas said there are problems with this, including how do you define what an experienced shooter is?
- Mr. Weatherall asked if Mr. Winthrop had been in contact with the Fish and Game club, and he confirmed he did not have the time. He feels this could still be a place to start to get some information. He serves on the fish and wildlife board.
- Chief Nikas wanted to discuss practical issues, unless someone comes to the station saying they wanted to establish a range would be all set. Someone who is going to take a grandchild out once a year, they are not going to be enforceable. He cannot enter someone's property until he hears the gunshots. So there is not anything they can do about this.
- Mr. Weatherall asked if this would be valuable to the town, and Chief Nikas said that if someone called and said they hurt gunshots in an area where he knew of an approved range he could let the neighbor know.
- Mr. Weatherall said we are on 2 substantial tracks. If there are to be guidelines, what will those be. The other is, do we need to address lot sizes and geometric items. These should be separate.
- Mr. Weatherall also wondered if the geometric problems could be addressed with the existing zoning bylaw.
- Dr. Boreri said this would be difficult because Farley is considered rural but the lot sizes are small, and felt the numbers should be used instead.
- Dr. Howe wondered if the committee could agree on what they consider is a safe space to shoot.
- Mr. Weatherall did not want to say a school and church were more important than any other place people gathering groups.
- Mr. Winthrop agreed said these guidelines need to be credible. He said right now we are passing around an area we do not have enough information on.
- Dr. Howe said we should go back to, if you are going to discharge your firearm and it is not hunting season, what are the guidelines as a town we feel are reasonable.
- Mr. Weatherall said this committee has a short time to make the recommendations to the selectman. We have knowledge on this committee but not the time to spend a large amount of time.
- Chief Nikas said we just need to make sure the berms are appropriate. We should define the backstop
- Dr. Boreri felt we should use the NRA guidelines.
- Mr. Weatherall asked if it was reasonable as a committee to focus on the parameters.
- Dr. Boreri felt the more defined we get the more the Chief can do, and she wanted to make sure that this was covered.
- Mr. Josephson said if we are too prescriptive, we may make something that is strict someone currently allowed would lose their ability.
- Chief Nikas would like this to remain as a guide.

- Dr. Howe said that leaving this up to the chief's discretion if it safe and we can give the homeowner the basic guidelines to know what is appropriate to set up.
- The Chief would contact other Chiefs to discuss the towns that have the Chief as the authority to see what they are currently doing.
- Mr. Weatherall said the committee agreed to recommend guidelines, to what level of detail does this committee need to go.
- Chief Nikas said the recommendation could be this could go to town meeting to vote/approve the guidelines created.
- Chief Nikas stated it is clear who is the person who sites their rifle once a year and who has a backyard range by how everything is set up.
- Dr. Howe said she felt it is easier for people to have an easy checklist of what they need to do and think about it when setting up.
- Mr. Josephson said we could come up with basic guidelines without being overly prescriptive.
- Mr. Weatherall felt a subsequent group, depending on what the selectman do with the recommendations would need to codify everything.
- Chief Nikas did not want this to become a bylaw because then it has to go town meeting to make any changes to even just wording.
- Dr. Boreri said at the next meeting after getting information from other police chiefs, and talking to the fish and game we could then start creating the guidelines.
- Mr. Weatherall felt this committee should address sound, and backstop and that another group would need to make the specifics.
- Dr. Howe asked if we feel comfortable proposing something simple like what Burlington has, and to provide guideline lists for all homeowners. The Chief agrees this is what we should have. If this was created a year ago he could have addressed issues reported.
- Discussion ensued about the timing for shooting. There was discussion about half an hour before sunset to a half an hour after sunset. Mr. Josephson said at his club they must stop shooting AT sunset.
- Next meeting main agenda item to try to hone in on what they want. Mr. Josephson requested the chief send out what he finds so it can be read prior to the meeting.
- Dr. Howe said the Town Moderator said they need to present an update on what was accomplished at Town meeting.
- Dr. Howe said we should include a link in the guidelines to the EPA. It is not ours to enforce, but use it as a reminder.
- Mr. Weatherall asked each member to bring to the next meeting what they think is important.
- Mr. Weatherall still felt there is some validity in using zoning. Allowed in the rural but maybe not the in-town.
- Mr. Winthrop had concerns about this, because it may look populated on the map, but it may not be. And it could be the opposite in the Rural district. He strongly feels we should not regulate any zoning.

### **Set Schedule for Future Meetings**

The next meeting would be August 25<sup>th</sup> at 7PM.

### **Adjournment**

*Mr. Josephson moved to adjourn at 8:27, Dr. Howe seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted by

Jennifer Dionne

8.22.16