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Abutters to proposed Durham Police Firearms Range

Dear Abutter:

As you may have read in the newspaper or "Friday Updates", the Durham Police Department is desirous of having a Firearms Range at the Public Works Facility located on Stone Quarry Drive. I wanted to send this letter with the intent to inform you of our needs, how we would use the range and to make assurances that our goal is not only to provide you with responsive police services but to also be a good and responsible neighbor.

No other agency or entity would be using the proposed range. It will be used exclusively by the Durham Police with qualifications occurring at least two times annually, possibly three as one of the exercises occurs in "low-light" which we generally schedule after Daylight Savings time changes in the Fall. The actual training consumes approximately 20-hours throughout the calendar year. The actual discharge of a firearm probably consumes half that time for a total year of approximately 10-hours of actual noise that you may hear and this includes all of the 20 sworn officers that comprise the department. Our training is based upon requirements from the New Hampshire Police Standards and Training Council, supported by Statute, which require the completion of sanctioned firearms and use of force training with qualifications occurring at least once annually. As the Durham Police are a nationally accredited agency, our standards are enhanced so that members of the department must qualify twice annually in addition to the low-light familiarization for a maximum of three times annually. Actually three is the maximum time we would be at the range as we routinely attempt to combine the low-light training with the second qualification thereby negating the need to have three exercises.

This initiative is temporary only while we await the proposed construction of a County-wide facility on Strafford County land in Dover. As I attempt to be cost-conscious during this period of waiting for the permanent range to be completed, it appears that the immediate practical option is the construction of a low cost earthen berm firearms range at the Durham Public Works facility. For the last ten (10) years, the Durham Police have been fortunate to have the use of the Rochester Police Department's outdoor Firearms range at minimal cost. However, recent changes in the utilization of the City of Rochester owned property surrounding the Police Department's Firearms Range has led to significant restrictions regarding the use of the range. As we have researched a number of viable and not so viable alternatives it is clear there are limited options available even with significant cost implications. All have a component of challenge to their use.

A NATIONALLY ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY



As you may know, the area surrounding the existing Public Works facility on Stone Quarry Drive was in fact a stone quarry with numerous indentations and berms remaining from that activity. There exists an exceptional area behind and virtually parallel to the existing truck storage building which is well suited for this purpose. Minimal work, such as the addition of a gravel base as well as adding dirt to the backdrop of the range coupled with the construction of a small storage shed for targets and other equipment, is easily addressed. In fact, I plan on working with the Oyster River High School to have one of their shop classes construct this shed with materials the police department would purchase thereby creating a win-win situation.

There will undoubtedly be times when you will hear the discharge of the weapons in spite of our best efforts to curtail any intrusion of noise into your home. However, if this proposal passes the Durham Planning Board review, I commit to notifying you via email or a telephone that you may wish to provide us, of every time we will be at the range. Again, it is our wish to be good, responsible and sensitive neighbors to the peace and tranquility of your home. If you have any questions or wish to speak to me personally about this proposal, please feel free to do so.

Sincerely,



David L. Kurz
Chief of Police