

*Special Board of Selectmen's Meeting
6:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 22, 2008
3rd Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall*

Meeting Minutes-Approved

Laura Francis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led with the pledge of allegiance.

Present: Selectmen John Szewczyk and James McLaughlin, State Police Major Christopher Arciero and Lt. C. Leon Pierce Jr., Resident State Trooper Peter DiGioia, Attorney Martha Dean

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m. due to room capacity.

Meeting reconvened 6:55 p.m. at the Durham Library Meeting Room.

Laura Francis opening the meeting by referring to the last special meeting held on May 1st on this subject and reported that Troop F's investigation was still ongoing, testing needed to be completed, and a final report drafted. She then read a statement from EPA Commissioner, Gina McCarthy. She then introduced and turned the meeting over to Major Christopher Arciero.

Major Arciero stated the State Police investigation was still ongoing, ballistics results were not back yet, they were looking for (54) .50 caliber round guns to be surrendered voluntarily July 24th that needed to be tested; when this information was compiled a final report will be drafted.

Attorney Martha Dean, representing Blue Trail Range, presented a PowerPoint presentation consisting of maps of the area, bullet trajectory, and recent safety improvements made. She stated Blue Trail Range retained the firm of C. Vargas and Associates, Ltd who determined the range could be better designed and made safety recommendations. She further stated the NRA was also consulted. Specific improvements include new baffles reconstructed with 16 inch gage steel; earthwork was done on the 25 yard range raising the backstop and adding a side berm; on the 100 yard range the backstop was also raised.

Attorney Dean then talked about new safety rules being more stringent and new procedures that have been put in place. Rules have been posted and the range is now completely fenced in with a locked gate preventing any outside access. Members are required to log in and supply a driver's license and pistol permit to the Range Officer. A physical inspection of the shooting area is required when the member is done to look for any damage. A house has been constructed for the Range Officer situated on the firing line that has security cameras that monitor firing.

L. Francis asked Attorney Dean if any safety measures were done to the 200 yard range. Attorney Dean stated no changes have been made. At this time the 200 yard range will be used for BB guns and air guns; no competitive shooting. L. Francis asked if the Range Officer was required to take NRA training. Attorney Dean responded yes.

L. Francis talked about the frustration over the lack of firing range rules, standards and regulations stating all state agencies have limitations to what they can address.

Pat DiNatale posed the following question to Major Arciero "if in fact the bullets are not coming from the Blue Trail Range and there is evidence of over 1000 bullet strikes in the woods, would there be any police patrolling?" Major Arciero stated new protocol was put in place for the reporting of stray bullet strikes and the immediate response by Troop F but reiterated they are still working on identifying stray bullets.

A resident asked if the new protocol put in place worked on Memorial Day. Major Arciero stated a stray bullet was reported but because of a short window period it was difficult to trace. The resident stated they heard no shooting in the woods at that time only shooting from the range.

A resident asked Attorney Dean what would determine the re-opening of the range? She responded by saying when all safety reports are completed and a 24 hour notice has been given to EPA Commissioner, Gina McCarthy.

Another resident asked Major Arciero when the State Police report on the investigation would come out and who would get it? He responded that he was not sure when the report would be finished and reiterated that additional testing would be done on the firearms voluntarily surrendered July 24th. As to who would get the report, it would be available under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act process.

Melissa DeVito expressed her frustration to the audience about this not being only about Pat DiNatale. That it was about safety in their homes. Ken DeVito questioned Attorney Dean's reference to the fact that everything is associated with risk, continuing by saying "we are in our homes where we should be safe from bullets."

A question from the audience about the land conveyed to P. DiNatale was directed to First Selectman Laura Francis; when the land was conveyed did Tri-Mountain residents complain about shooting & hunting on this property? L. Francis responded that she is not familiar with the details of that conveyance.

A resident asked if there was a plan in place to maintain the berms at Blue Trial Range. Attorney Dean stated the berms would be checked weekly to make sure they are being maintained and that an annual elevation survey would be done. The resident asked if this information would be available to the public. Attorney Dean stated no, documentation would not be created.

L. Francis thanked everyone for coming and being respectful of each other.

Meeting adjourned: 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Beth Moncata