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The News Desk

Spotsylvania supervisors ponder shooting-ordinance change

BY JEFF BRANSCOME

Spotsylvania County gun owners who live on more than an acre may soon be able to shoot on their property. Residents currently face misdemeanor charges if they fire guns in any subdivision, regardless of how many acres their lots are. The Board of Supervisors is considering amending the county ordinance to state that discharging guns in subdivisions is illegal only on lots of one acre or less. Some think the proposed law is too strict, and others believe it may be too lax.

County officials recently announced that they would have a public hearing on the proposal in the near future. Supervisors have been discussing the law privately since March. Supervisors' Chairwoman Ann Heidig said the county ordinance was brought to board members' attention after a rural landowner accused a neighbor of shooting onto his property. Heidig called the current law vague.

"We were looking for something that was relatively simple and also kind of clear," Heidig said. The current law, for instance, doesn't specify the definition of subdivision.

The proposed version defines a subdivision as any housing development that has a plat on file with the Circuit Court Clerk's Office. A subdivision doesn't include a lot that has been divided by a property owner to sell or give to an immediate family member, according to the proposed change. The proposal also doesn't include pneumatic weapons —such as BB and paintball guns—in its definition of a firearm. The county has another ordinance for those guns, which are not banned in subdivisions. Stafford County's gun law is much broader than Spotsylvania's. It prohibits shooting firearms in many sections of the county and states exactly where those areas are.

Spotsylvania Supervisor Gary Skinner said he doesn't have a problem with allowing people to shoot guns on lots of five acres or more, but said he's "not sure I'm comfortable with one acre" for safety reasons. He said he hasn't received complaints about the current law from his constituents.

Heidig said her husband told her he thinks common sense—not a law—should dictate where people fire their guns. He believes people should be able to shoot guns if they're being responsible and have a proper backstop, she said.

Heidig, a Republican who describes herself as being for property rights and the Second Amendment, said she's on the fence about the proposed changes.

"I'm kind of comfortable with it, but again, I can see where people might not be," she said. "I just want to hear what they have to say."

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By Edie Gross on May 12th, 2012 11:01 pm

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- [April 2012](#)
- [March 2012](#)
- [February 2012](#)
- [January 2012](#)
- [December 2011](#)
- [November 2011](#)
- [October 2011](#)
- [September 2011](#)

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 **MomaK**

I live in a Spoty. subdivision where everyone has at least an acre. I also have a bullet hole in the siding on the side of my house. I guess it's from a neighbor just exercising his right to shoot. Glad it was just the siding and not one of my grandchildren.

1 day ago 1 Like Like Reply

 **Robert Senter**

Here's an idea: Model an outdoor public shooting range using National Forrest guidelines. There are excellent ranges throughout the state. Blacksburg, VA's range is one of the best. Citizens should join forces with some of the premier firearms dealers in the area to make this happen.

There are a couple shooting/hunting clubs in this area, but they're relatively small and not-very-well-known. Some of their membership fees are outrageous. Point is, there are a LOT of people from the area that would use a range.

Secondly, acreage is a null argument for "safety" in shooting (in this area). If this proposed ordinance change affects you, then like-minded land owners need to approach this intelligently. "Anything over 1 acre" obviously is a weak argument. I've heard that Caroline County has a fairly good system for approving backdrop setups on private property, wherein basic backdrop build requirement are set forth, the landowner is advised of noise ordinances - and then the range has to be approved by some county official.

Lastly, consideration for neighbors is the key to a favorable change to the ordinance. Sometimes, you can't reason with people - but most of the time, if you walk next door and say "hey, I'm going to build a range on my property, so here is my plan for safety, etc...and I'd like to know if there are any times of the day this would really annoy you...and oh, by the way, if there's a particular day you'd like me not to shoot, just call me and let me know."goes over WAY better than "I'm on my property, I don't care what you think." If MY neighbor did this, I'd chip in money to help him build the range in exchange for him letting me use it!

P.S. There are at least three gun dealers in the Fredericksburg area that sell firearms suppressors. They significantly quench "muzzle blast," reduce "felt" recoil and are perfectly legal. Generally speaking, if you can purchase a gun, you can purchase a suppressor. Google a trusted source (namely

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JohnSickel

Whatever happened to personal responsibility? Who is Bob or anyone else to tell me what I can and cant do on MY private property? Mind your own business and I'll continue mindig mine. I would suggest that if you dont want your neighbors shooting, you should look in to a lot that is less than an acre.

To Bob Sargent- You say that you support the Second Amendment? Is that only when it suits your tastes?

Furthermore, Should you have the option to limit the issuance of drivers licenses because you feel that certain individuals are incompetent? I think not, but vehicles kill far more than guns every year.

Spotsy supervisors- Amend the law to include clarification. 1 acre is more than enough land with a proper backstop. Well done!

1 day ago 1 Like

Like Reply



Robert Senter

For the record, the second amendment does not permit you to FIRE your gun. Unless you have some cool forcefield surrounding your property, I'd think your neighbor is allowed to have an opinion about the possibility projectiles coming onto their property at 3200fps. Just sayin'

1 day ago in reply to JohnSickel

Like Reply



Richard Tater

Bob Sargeant needs to lay off the catnip, it's making him delirious. Meow. Bob should move to Alexandria or Adams Morgan so he can feel safe while listening to his massive showtune collection. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go practice my banjo playing.

1 day ago 1 Like

Like Reply



Jerry Massey

Instead of name calling, I'm just going to say that I like the Stafford County approach here. I think a nice compromise should be worked out to allow people in rural sections of the county to fire on their own property no matter how small the acreage is.

The people who have moved to particularly the northern part of the county over the past few decades can keep their subdivisions free of shooting while those in the more rural, southern part of the county, can have a bit more freedom in firing their weapons.

Demographics and the layout of land and property are extremely different in both halves so I think a one-law-fits-all approach here isn't needed.

Personally, I think people should be able to fire on their property no matter where they live. But you get the types of people that move to the more urban areas of the county who complain about everything (traffic, crime, etc.) Yet, it makes you

wonder why they even moved here in the first place since that's exactly what they were complaining about in their previous jurisdiction.

So to appease those, just go ahead and make subdivisions free of any gun firing before the people that live in them start to throw a massive fit by saying that hearing a gun being shot somehow ruins their quality of life.

1 day ago 1 Like

Like Reply



Bob Sargeant

Ms Heidig, property rights include the right not to have 168 grain boat tail hollow points crossing your property line. An acre? An acre is about the size of a football field. A 7.62X51 or 5.56X45 is extremely dangerous at a helluva lot farther than 100 yards. What kind of cousin-loving, gap-toothed trailer-dwelling, Elvis-worshipping (remember Elvis almost blew away his girlfriend, accidentally) moron would even consider shooting on a minimum of an acre as the proposed law states. Remember the boxes of .22 that have "Danger, Range 1 mile" printed on them? This has nothing to do with the 2nd amendment which I have ardently supported and I have also been an NRA member off and on since 1964. So, you can't hunt deer with solid shot in much of VA due to safety offsets, but you can shoot a .50 Barrett on your property if you have more than an acre? What about backstops? What about noise? What about caliber restrictions? What about the lot's shape? Even if one has an acre, it may be oblong, etc. Which azimuth is one restricted to shooting on based n adjacent land owners lines? Nothing is thought out. No cerebral activity. Use an effective, reasonable shooting ordinance from some place where people have brains as a model. A sensible law would be based on the zoning as well the size of the property. Spotsy is not Jed Clampettville any more, it has a Sierra-load of people in it now, largely due to poor planning so let's not make it even worse by pretending that it is the middle of Montana.

1 day ago 1 Like

Like Reply



Bob Sargeant

I like Tater's comment, he's got a sense of humor. Mr. Sickel, you already have the Gov poking its nose into your property rights via zoning. I own just shy of 3 acres and because I have the personal responsibility that you tout, I would never shoot anything bigger than an air rifle here due to the surrounding density and my respect for my neighbor's lives and peace of mind. I was on a competitive shooting team at the age of 13. We fired .22 LR in a high school basement. It ain't the amount of property that matters, it is the layout, and that, I believe, would be abrogated by this law as proposed. We need to protect the 2nd Amendment by trying to be good neighbors.

1 day ago

Like Reply



Dean Fetterolf

Stafford rural outdoor recreational shooters should be aware that this same issue has been referred to the public safety committee. One homeowner and one supervisor complained about the noise. Supervisors Cavalier, Snellings, Scheiber are the committee.

1 day ago

Like Reply



Maria Glass

Obviously these people have never heard the expression "travelling at the speed of a bullet..." Hope they publish the addresses so I can avoid driving by. As usual, we'll have to wait for the first casualty to realize the stupidity of the proposition.

1 day ago

Like Reply



Edward Newell

its the whole county stafford too stay away! to be safe of course.

1 day ago in reply to Maria Glass

Like Reply

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