

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

COLLABORATIVE

A representative from Newton Gun Violence Prevention Collaborative could not attend tonight's meeting, but we would like to publicly express our support for Docket Item #183-22 to prohibit the discharge of non-powder guns, which includes air guns, air rifles, BB guns or pellet guns, within Newton's city limits.

Currently, federal law does not consider or regulate non-powder guns as firearms. While these types of guns are typically less lethal than traditional firearms, they have become increasingly powerful over time and they injure or kill, thousands of people, mostly children, and animals each year. Often considered "starter guns" for youth, non-powder guns can easily be mistaken for real guns creating confusion for law enforcement which can lead to tragic results. Additionally, Newton veterinarians routinely see pets who have been shot by BB guns at some point in their past. In short, these weapons are harmful and potentially lethal and should be regulated as such.

Massachusetts law regulates non-powder guns to some degree, prohibiting their sale to minors and prohibiting their discharge in some public places. But recognizing that non-powder guns are dangerous, many municipalities impose further restrictions on air guns. Medford, Peabody, Winthrop, Revere, Somerville, Amherst, and Chelsea all prohibit the discharge of any air gun within city limits, with limited exceptions (such as by a police officer performing official duties or for a military exercise). These types of limitations have already been upheld by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

As you will likely hear tonight,, Ward 3 residents recently contacted city officials expressing concern for their safety because a neighbor has set up a firing range for a high powered air rifle in his backyard. They are rightfully scared by the loud gunshot noises and on at least one occasion bullets have strayed beyond the gun owner's property creating a serious risk to public safety.

Newton's current policies do not prohibit the use of these weapons and residents in this situation currently have no recourse. People should be able to mow their lawns, sit in their yards, or play on their swingsets without being fearful of stray bullets. Additionally, no pet owner should have to be told that their pet was shot for sport in Newton.

We have the privilege of living in a city that is united in its desire to make Newton safer from gun violence. This simple change to our ordinance can accomplish that and may help pave the way for other municipalities to take action. Please support 183-22 to treat non-powder guns as the dangerous weapons they are and prohibit their use within our city limits. There is no need to wait for a tragedy before taking action,

Thank you.

The Leadership Team of Newton Gun Violence Prevention Collaborative

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