

GUN RANGE OFFICIAL STATEMENT

The proposed state police gun range has been a hot topic here in Griswold. The proposed Lee Road site has brought many people out into the forefront to voice their opinions on the range and as First Selectman it has been my responsibility to hear them. Regardless of my personal opinion I am first and foremost a public servant whose job it is to represent my constituents.

I must admit in the beginning I was open to the idea of the gun range. More police presence in town is not a bad thing, and neither is the business that many of us thought it would bring. But through listening to many people like local business leaders, we learned that that wasn't the case. On top of this Griswold cannot tax the range as it is state owned, and would be paid by a pilot program in lieu of taxes. The issue with that is that that program is woefully underfunded and that Griswold might never see a dime of that money.

It is my understanding that the proposed site in Griswold is designated as a prime soil location by the USDA. This location is also surrounded by the largest open space in the state of Connecticut-Pachaug State Forest. The forest is a location rich with wildlife and is designated as a part of the last green valley. It is also my understanding that the DEEP has had an interest in acquiring this land to add to the existing state forest.

I want to make it very clear that I do support the Connecticut State Police and their need to train and hone their skills. Congressman Joe Courtney has provided an option for the East Haven range to be utilized. This option is the most common sense approach to this situation. The taxpayers will save millions and the CT State Police will get their facility to train. I would much rather see our police spend money on gear that they need to keep themselves and our people safe. Upon having town meetings with the public the amount of opposition in the community to this project was truly shown. Town meetings went from an average of maybe a dozen people to well in the hundreds. After the vote on whether the town should support the gun range or not was counted it became official. The "no" votes outnumbered the "yes" votes by hundreds.

After further research it was learned that the state planned to build this facility by the use of bonds. The multimillion-dollar facility would bring even more economic strain on a state that is teetering on the edge of financial collapse. Whatever the reason for your personal "no" vote may be, it is clear that the state cannot and should not spend money they don't have on a facility they do not need. That is why today, as First Selectman of the great town of Griswold, I am standing with my town residents in saying no to the proposed gun range here in our town.

Respectfully,
Kevin Skulczyck
Griswold First Selectman