

To: Jeffrey.Beckham@ct.gov

From: Robert Panko, landowner and resident of Voluntown, Ct.

Subject: Comments regarding Connecticut State Police Informational Meeting, Voluntown, March 15 2016

March 21, 2016

Greetings Jeffrey,

My name is Robert Panko and my wife Jennifer Panko and I own and live on our property at 259 Brown Road in Voluntown, Ct.

First off I thank you for coming to Voluntown to present facts about the proposed State Police Shooting Range in Voluntown. I also say as a life time target shooter and former law enforcement officer of 25 years I appreciate and understand the need for the State Police to have a state of the art training facility.

Both my wife and I are vehemently opposed to this project in Voluntown, and for that matter in any place where potential noise impacts will affect the natural background when we (or people that flock to Voluntown for our State Forest trails and streams and campgrounds) are enjoying our Patchaug State Forest.

This includes opposition the Lee Site in Griswold that will impact many miles of trails in Patchaug State Forest as well as the campground, picnic areas, waterways and trails in Hopeville Pond State Park.

Economically these proposals in the long run will result in significant negative impacts to the tourism trade Voluntown has been trying to market. Yes we will sell more sandwiches in our shops in Voluntown to visiting State Police Officers. But yes the noise itself and public knowledge of this noisy "state of the art" range in our town will have a significant negative impact on many existing businesses in our town that cater to the forest tourism industry. It will also likely negatively impact our future development of businesses in our town that cater to such a market.

I am glad you are now posting information about locations and additional information on all the proposed sites in the three towns of Canterbury, Voluntown and Griswold, albeit a little after the fact. This information should have been posted at the same time your agency was announcing the meetings, and the fact that the State was reluctant to provide this information to prepare our citizens for these meetings was to say the least unfair. I know a few people who were personally "punched in the gut" at both the Canterbury and Voluntown meetings by arriving at the meeting and finding out locations were in immediate proximity to their homes. They should not have been subjected to this.

Saying that, I cannot figure out how the State has failed to realize this is a "regional" issue, while persisting to deal with it on a town by town basis. For instance, did the State even consider the fact that both of the Pendleton Hill sites in Voluntown would also potentially impact a large number of homes in both North Stonington and Griswold? Where any residents in North Stonington (a mere 0.6 miles south

of the Pendleton Hill sites) notified or informed of the Voluntown meeting? There are numerous homes in Griswold (especially around Billings Lake) that could potentially be impacted by these sites in Voluntown. Were the Pendleton Hill sites mentioned at the Griswold meeting? Did the State solicit their opinions about the Voluntown project, or even mention them during the Griswold meeting?

I believe the answer to all these questions is no.

The States track record of failing to adequately communicate basic information about these proposals or recognize these are regional not TOWN issues absolutely discredits the States ability to adequately address the concerns of an apparent majority of residents in Voluntown opposed to this project in our town. This "apparent majority" is based upon the volume of speakers at the Voluntown meeting who spoke against the proposal versus the number who endorsed the proposal.

The State, in this Pre-Scoping process, certainly has failed to instill confidence in our States ability to meet our concerns about noise mitigation, wildlife impacts, toxic contamination, agricultural impacts, traffic issues and the negative impact to the economy in Voluntown which is very much based on visitors to our Patchaug State Forest. Holding meetings about sites that were not in the least bit vetted by the State (some of them will not eventually meet the criteria published by the State) only served to create angst among residents and concern as to whether the State would eventually address their very real concerns.

It is discomfoting to know that the State has never sampled soils at the Simsbury Range for lead. Our own town development goals consider the conservation of the quality of our ground water as a high priority.

The proposals, especially regarding the Ekonk Hill site in Voluntown, are directly in conflict with the current Voluntown Plan of Conservation and Development, despite the endorsement of our First Selectman.

It is discomfoting to know that speculative investment landowners who don't even live in our town could bring the State to consider building this in our community where we will have no vote on the issue and where the State may or may not choose to abide by our local zoning.

It is discomfoting to know that the State's meetings, intended to gauge the interest of the towns in hosting such a facility, apparently pay no heed to the will of the town residents voiced at the meetings. After all the opposition from the Selectman and residents of Willington, that proposal is "still in play" according to Commissioner Currey. How could it be made more clear to the State that the majority of residents of Willington, Canterbury and Voluntown are clearly not in support of these proposals and should be "off the table" of State consideration?

Does the desire of an out of town investment firm landowner, who in November of 2015, undoubtedly knowing that he would be interested in selling his land for this proposal, suddenly doubled the sales

price of his land from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million dollars trump the majority desires of the residents of the town for it not to be located here? It becomes even more interesting when one discovers that investment firm is already engaged with the State with numerous other State property agreements or sales. Overall my land values have not doubled since 2015, so why did this tract?

To this proposal we emphatically say NO.

We suggest that the State continue to pursue a different location such as an abandoned rock or sand quarry in a location that already has a higher level of background noise that will mask the sound of this Range, instead of in our "Quiet Corner" of this State.

Due to the fact that this is a Range to be used by all Connecticut State Police officers statewide, it also makes common sense that the chosen venue, as was Simsbury, be more centrally located to all its officers as opposed to only a few miles from Rhode Island. This makes sense for both long term cost savings for State Police officer travel costs, efficiency and reducing long term fuel use impacts.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Panko". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Robert Panko