

Northwest CT Sportsman's Council

NWCSC
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Council Report: December 28, 2004

Meeting Called to order at 7:40PM by Council President Chris Marino. All rise for Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll of clubs, delegates, officers and guests:

NWCSC
Woodbury/Southbury
Torrington Fish & Game
Waterbury F & G

Jason Marshall
Phil Mauriello
Joe Rinaldi
Jerry Ciarcia

Newgate Coon Club
Goshen Sportsmen
Harwinton R & G
NVBC

Elise Mauriello
Tom Accousti
Mike Fusco
Chris Marino

Guest speaker Dennis Golden, member of Board of Governors for the Metacon Gun Club.

Officers present were President Chris Marino and Vice President Jason Marshall.

Regular business was suspended in order to allow Dennis Golden an opportunity to make a presentation to the delegates regarding the status of two state lawsuits and one federal lawsuit filed against **Metacon Gun Club**. The suits have been brought by neighbors and allege zoning, safety and environmental violations by the club. This was followed by a discussion period between our delegates and Dennis, after which Dennis left the meeting and regular business resumed. We took up the Metacon issue again under new business.

Facts regarding Metacon:

165-acre facility with both indoor and outdoor ranges.

750 current members.

5 Police Departments use range.

National Guard and State Police use allowed, along with several security teams for firearms training.

Range hours are 1 hour after sunrise to one hour before sunset.

Dennis stated that Metacon's problems originated with one neighbor's noise complaint. This neighbor lives 1.5 miles away. Complaints escalated culminating in the formation of the Simsbury/Avon Preservation Society, which has spearheaded the various complaints against the club and has worked to organize the community and the public in general to support their views. According to Dennis, this group has sued the Town of Simsbury for putting the wrong zoning rules in place as regards the club and land use. They have also instigated state investigations of the club on multiple complaints. The club has also been subject to a federal tax audit. Metacon has already spent \$120,000 defending the club and estimates the final cost will more than double that figure. The costs alone of defending such actions would close most clubs down regardless of whether there is a real problem or not.

Dennis maintains that the work this group has done has set up a precedent for the closure of any shooting club in the state and that is the reason that we all should be concerned with how the Metacon issue is resolved. Dennis cites the Mattabasett Club as one that is now going through the early stages of the same efforts.

The state police range, which is located along one side of Metacon has seen a greatly increased use of its facility by law enforcement agencies using all types of firearms and munitions. The state police range has not experienced the same treatment as Metacon. Nod Brook field Trail area is on the other side of Metacon and there is no action against this shooting area.

Several national consultants including the NRA and the US Military have done testing. All testing to date has shown no safety problems and little or nothing in the way of environmental impact.

Metacon is looking to our Council and other Connecticut organizations for support in defending the club. Financial aid would be welcome, as would organizational endorsement of the club and its position.

Discussion:

Joe Rinaldi commented on water quality issues and how this could affect ranges. The noise issue was discussed along with the Range Protection Act, which protects clubs from noise issues to some degree. (100 decibels at the club property line.) The problem is that this Act has not been tested in Connecticut courts. If it were to fail in the courts, all ranges would be at risk.

We are told that the Coalition of CT Sportsmen is becoming more involved with Metacon's status and that the DEP, through the former Commissioner, was supportive.

Resume Regular Business:

Council Report for the November meeting was reviewed and accepted.

Financial Report was given by Chris Marino. A balance sheet for our checking account was handed out to all delegates in attendance. The financial report was accepted as presented.

Discussion of investment of surplus funds in Council checking account. **Mike Fusco motions** that "a committee be designated to investigate various secure investment options for investing a portion of Council funds shortly after the 205 Banquet." Motion receives a second and is **passed**. The Council President will designate a committee to conduct this investigation and make recommendations to the Council.

Correspondence:

Received e-mail from Dennis Golden, Board of Governors for Metacon Gun Club asking permission to address the Council at our December meeting and enquiring about membership.

Committees:

Membership:

An updated Call list of Council delegates and clubs was distributed. The list was reviewed for accuracy and edited at the meeting. It was decided that a letter would be drafted and sent to the secretary of inactive clubs asking that participation be reviewed at a regular meeting of the club and a decision be made regarding active club support of the Council. Support can take the form of active participation in Council meetings and activities, banquet table purchases, or outright donations.

Banquet:

We only have one more regular meeting before the February banquet. Tickets and announcements have been printed and distributed to delegates in attendance. Dean Fraley, our merchandise chairman, was not present at the December meeting. Therefore, we had no official report on merchandise status for the banquet. Donations are needed.

Mike Fusco suggests a "Use It or Loose It " raffle at the door on the night of the banquet. Mike to set up this raffle. Mike also wants to see tags on items recognizing any club contributions. We need to designate people to run games and concessions. Cards for all auction items.

CAC: Report to be posted to our web site. Fur-bearer biologist Paul Rego gave a major presentation regarding the status of black bear in CT, and future management options.

Old Business:

Discuss extending deer hunting hours. Bring this up at CAC.

New Business:

A Colt custom shop, penholder was presented to Buddy Milo as a small thank you from the Council for his efforts in making our ATV raffle a success.

Discussed state land management and habitat work. We have set up a meeting with Peter Picone to discuss possibilities. We see a need to develop cooperative programs for large-scale management that would utilize the expertise of state biologists and planners, the commercial forest industry and sportsmen. The reality seems to be that no single entity, whether state or private, has the ability or finances to do this type of work alone. Most of our sportsmen are old enough to remember better times with more native small game available. We lived in a more active rural setting then, and agriculture was a widely practiced activity in all of our towns. We need to recreate the type of successional habitat that was a by-product of the rural economy. There no longer is a strong economic incentive to work the land and as a result, there is little disturbance to the increasing forest cover of our state.

We feel that the right combination of state and private forestry cooperation could provide economic benefit to the state's economy while at the same time providing a habitat infrastructure and access that could be maintained by volunteer sportsmen.

Metacon Issue:

We discussed the issues facing Metacon and Dennis Golden's presentation to the Council. The feeling of the delegates present was of general support for the club with some reservations on one specific practice. The issue of financial assistance was deferred since Metacon is not a Council affiliated club yet and our ability to directly aid the club financially is minimal in view of the potential need they may yet have. One delegate observed that we should review the actual allegations and lawsuits facing Metacon before we offer financial aid in the future.

Tom Accousti mentioned some of the night fire exercises and munitions activity occurring on the State Police Range adjacent to Metacon. The point being that some of the problem may be outside the club's activities.

It was decided that we would check with Bob Crook of CCS and find out what the CCS position is on the Metacon issue and what kind of support CCS is offering the club. A report on our findings will be presented at the January meeting.

The entire issue of range protection is a subject that we should address in some meaningful way in the near future. For starters, any development within a pre-determined distance of an existing range should require mandatory disclosure of the existence of the shooting activity anywhere it occurs in the state. We should also consider legislation mandating state aid in any case of identifiable and correctable environmental or safety issues. Another way to look at this is that the state should recognize the value and benefit of the recreational facilities our clubs provide the general public; and therefore should be pro-active in helping to keep these clubs open.

Items to be taken up and considered: Extend Muzzleloader Deer season through end of December. Hunters at mercy of weather and holiday season. Minimal impact on herd.

Question of tagging requirement for fox and coyote taken by sport hunting, (not trapping). If there is no need to examine carcass, we would like this requirement eliminated, as it imposes unnecessary inconvenience on hunters. A mail in report card would suffice for record keeping. Possible to only require examination during deer season check station operation.

Good of the Council:

Adjourn: 10PM