

To: Oldham County Homeowners Association  
RE: Firearm Discharge

A generic greeting is used because this is being sent to over 30 homeowner associations in Oldham County.

As you may be aware, the Oldham County Fiscal Court decided **NOT** to restrict the discharge of firearms in Oldham County at the March 4, 2008 meeting. The ordinance being considered provided a minimal amount of restriction. It would have prohibited anyone from "discharge of firearms within 300 feet of a dwelling or structure, or any such dwelling or structure suitable for occupation" unless the person discharging the firearm owned or occupied the dwelling or was accompanied by another person or persons that owned or occupied the dwelling.

There were a number of people who spoke against the ordinance and only one person, Ms. Jackie Clauser, who lives in Crystal Lake on the east side of Hwy 53 in LaGrange, who spoke in favor of it. She has had problems with a neighbor who apparently likes to discharge a firearm in that subdivision. Without a doubt, the turnout of the number of people who spoke against the ordinance was orchestrated.

I live in L'Esprit and one of my neighbors had a horse shot by a reckless, irresponsible discharge of a firearm on Monday March 3<sup>rd</sup>, the day before the Fiscal Court meeting. Other residents were not made aware of it until Wednesday, the day after the meeting.

A number of us have decided to see what we can do to persuade the members of Fiscal Court to enact some type of restriction as far as discharging weapons is concerned. It might be difficult to enforce, but at least there will be some formal ordinance against the reckless discharge of firearms. The wanton endangerment laws are not sufficient to protect people, animals, and property from reckless, irresponsible people, nor for that matter, is any ordinance that would be enacted. We are not seeking a ban on firing weapons as some of the people who spoke against the ordinance would have people believe. We are seeking some type of restriction that would be followed by law abiding citizens, like a ban on the reckless discharge of firearms in populated areas with, of course, exceptions for personal or property protection. We just feel that the discharge of firearms, especially in more densely populated areas, is not in the best interest of the safety of the majority of Oldham County residents.

**YOUR HELP IS NEEDED**

Please communicate to the homeowners in your association and request they contact their Magistrate and voice their opinion on gun regulation. Many of us are writing to the Oldham Era, my letter is included, and are contacting our Magistrate. The Magistrates e-mail addresses may be found at the Oldham County web-site [www.oldhamcounty.net](http://www.oldhamcounty.net).

If you would like to contact me my e-mail is [rvessels@bellsouth.net](mailto:rvessels@bellsouth.net). We would appreciate your support in this issue vital for the safety of all Oldham County citizens.

Robert Vessels  
1320 Bluegrass Pkwy  
LaGrange



Oldham Era Editor

On March 4th, by inaction on the part of Oldham County Fiscal Court, the rights of citizens to discharge a firearm almost anywhere they want to in Oldham County was affirmed. One citizen after another came before the members of Fiscal Court and stated that voting for the proposed ordinance would be limiting their rights. They all professed to use firearms safely, and even some members of this august board made comments about wanting to be able to hunt and teach their grandchildren to hunt safely. It is easy to believe this was an orchestrated effort to influence the members of Fiscal Court. Only one Oldham County citizen had the fortitude to speak in favor of passing the ordinance that would have done nothing more than prohibit the discharge of a firearm within 300 feet of a house, or building that could be assumed to be inhabited, unless the structure was owned by the person discharging the weapon or accompanying the person discharging the weapon.

Some of the people who spoke told how they had lived in Oldham County their entire lives and had hunted here the whole time. One gentleman even mentioned the fact he had done so for 57 years.

According to statistics the population of Oldham County in 1950, 57 years ago, was 11,018 with a population density of 58.2 people per square mile. According to the US Census Bureau the population of Oldham County in 2006 was 55,285 and applying the average growth over the last 5 years of 2.8% the estimated population at the end of 2007 was estimated at 56,832. This is a population density of 300 people per square mile.

To paraphrase an auto commercial of a few years ago "This isn't your father's Oldham County".

One of the speakers indicated some citizens wanted to impose the laws of Louisville on a rural county. As chronicled almost daily in the Courier-Journal, life in Louisville seems to have a certain degree of irresponsible citizens also.

Since that meeting of Fiscal Court there have been two incidents that vividly display the effects of irresponsible discharge of firearms. One in L'Esprit where a horse was shot at about 3 PM - not in a pasture at the far reaches of a large farm but rather in a small pasture area in the front of a residence less than 300 feet off Bluegrass Parkway. Another incident was reported in the Oldham Era where a resident of Orchard Grass Hills fired a rifle out the back window of his home into the darkness of his backyard.

In the first incident, which was without a doubt an act by an irresponsible individual, the horse is still at Equine Services hospital and the owners' vet bills are mounting quickly. A person could very well have been struck by that bullet. In the second incident apparently no person or animal was hit, however it is certainly plausible for the bullet to have struck or even entered another house and the individual was charged with first degree wanton endangerment.



As anyone versed in firearm safety knows, one of the foremost principles in firearm safety is knowing where the bullet will wind up, especially if you miss the target you are aiming at.

Fiscal Court should consider the rights of ALL property owners in Oldham County. They should have the right to enjoy their own property without fear of bullets entering their property.

Oldham County is considering an extensive Bike, Pedestrian and Greenway Master Plan to encourage citizens to hike and ride bikes and horses on many trails throughout the county. Citizens who would use these trails would expect to do so without worrying about bullets striking them.

Fiscal Court should adopt an ordinance that does not limit where a firearm may be discharged, but rather adopt an ordinance that makes it illegal for a projectile, either bullet, pellet or arrow, fired from a weapon to land on, or pass through, property owned by someone other than the individual firing the weapon unless specific permission has been granted by the property owner.

It doesn't matter if one owns 23/100 of an acre in PeWee Valley, 2 acres in Harrods Crossing, 5 acres in Grand Dell, 8 acres in L'Esprit, or a 500 acre farm, or any size property anywhere in Oldham County, they deserve to know they will not have bullets entering their property to endanger people or livestock.

The members of Fiscal Court need to be responsive to the safety needs of all the citizens of Oldham County, and I dare say the majority of the increase of 45,000 residents that have chosen to call Oldham County their home would be in agreement that, as their elected representatives, the members of Fiscal Court need to consider their rights and safety.

And to the responsible citizens who want to safely discharge their firearms, you need to make sure the round falls on your property or on the property of an individual that has given you permission to fire into their property. That is the only safe way.

Robert Vessels  
LaGrange

