

TO: Thurston County Commissioners
FROM: Dr. E.J. Zita, PO Box 1441, Olympia 98507
DATE: 13.Dec.2004
RE: Revised Noise Ordinance

I support the proposed amendment to the Thurston County Public Disturbance Noise Ordinance, chapter 10.36 Thurston County Code, sections 10.36.010, 10.36.014, 10.36.020, 10.36.030, and 10.36.040, and adopting new section 10.36.035.
Thank you for letting me take this opportunity to address some points recently raised by opponents to the ordinance.

The ordinance is fair. The 55 dBA limit is already Washington state law. There are exceptions for lawn maintenance (Section 6, Exemption 5), which was a concern to some citizens who did not read the ordinance before testifying.

The ordinance should save time for the Sheriff's office, so it should save money for taxpayers. In fact, Lt. Mealy said two years ago that they needed a more specific noise ordinance, to make it easier to enforce. If Sheriff's officers can enforce the ordinance, this should reduce repeat calls to deal with repeat offenders.

The Sheriff's office already has decibel meters for measuring noise levels. Citizens can also borrow a meter from the County (Darryl Cochran) or from the Coalition Against ORV Nuisances (Nancy Armstrong).

The ordinance affirms that peace is a fundamental right in one's home. People in the county have as much right to peace and quiet as people inside city limits.

If further information is needed, for example field trips for the Commissioners to evaluate the quality and loudness of nuisance noise, this should be arranged in consultation with a neutral third party with training in noise science. It is not appropriate for opponents of the noise ordinance to be allowed to run the show, e.g. by having a biased ORV demonstration. One expert who has served as a consultant for noise issues around Washington State, is Jerry Lilly at JGL Acoustics (425-649-9344, <http://www.jglacoustics.com/>)

I am seriously concerned that opponents of the noise ordinance, especially ORV proponents, have been shown preference in recent hearings. If ORV riders or salesmen are invited to speak at length or given special deference, this creates the appearance of a conflict of interest. Citizens should be reassured that there is no conflict of interest, by restoring fair proceedings and inviting testimony from neutral experts.

I understand that ORV riders and salesmen are concerned that enforcing noise limits in accordance with existing State law makes ORV racetracks illegal. The question of where they can ride their ORVs is a separate question. The noise ordinance stands on its own as a necessary and fair ordinance, covering all nuisance noise, not just ORVs.

Thank you for your consideration.