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# Woodbury City Council bans 'targeted picketing'

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Reacting to protests outside the homes of 3M executives last year, the Woodbury City Council voted Wednesday night in favor of an ordinance that bans "targeted picketing" of residences.

The protests that inspired the ordinance involved chanting by animal rights activists but didn't lead to arrests or skirmishes with police, said Capt. Jay Alberio, who helped draft the proposed ordinance.

Police had received complaints of five separate incidents with seven to 15 protesters each that were affiliated with Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC), he said. That group objects to 3M's contracts with Huntingdon Life Sciences, a British firm that uses animals to test products from 3M and other companies.

"I would point out that liberty has always been messy," said Jim Grinols, of Woodbury, one of about 10 people who asked the council to reject the ordinance. "A new law that would totally ban peaceful protest is incorrect."

Police Chief Lee Vague, who defended the ordinance as a way to preserve the peace when residents felt they were being targeted,

told the council that the ordinance would be unlikely to result in arrests.

The council passed the ordinance 4-1. Council Member Amy Scoggins, the sole vote against it, said, "One of the things that bothers me is that nobody showed up to support the ordinance."

City Administrator Clint Gridley said the city believes "strongly" in the right of individuals to exercise their First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and assembly, but he said the city attorney researched the proposed ordinance and concluded it was constitutional. Maplewood, White Bear Lake and Shoreview all have ordinances that forbid "targeted picketing," he said, and the White Bear Lake ordinance was tested in the Minnesota Court of Appeals and found to be constitutional.

The White Bear Lake ordinance was passed in 1990 after the Planned Parenthood of Minnesota executive director, who lived in the city, asked for the city's help to stop pickets in front of his house.

The Woodbury ordinance will make punishable by misdemeanor any marching, standing or patrolling "directed solely at a particular residential building in a manner that adversely affects the safety, security or privacy of an occupant of the building."

Alberio said the city doesn't want to deprive protesters of constitutional rights but wants to preserve peace in the neighborhoods. He said residents who called police said they found the noise disturbing.

Woodbury also has an ordinance that prohibits behavior that "annoys, injures or endangers the health, safety, comfort or repose of the public," but the city attorney determined the subjective

nature of the existing ordinance "would likely be challenged in court," Gridley told council members in a memo.

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