

Car window shattered outside Planned Parenthood

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Kathy Sousa says it's not the first time anti-abortion protesters have been the target of violence outside Manchester's Planned Parenthood office.

Yesterday, someone shot out the window of her car as it sat parked across from the center at 24 Pennacook St. where she and a handful of fellow New Hampshire Right To Life members were holding their weekly vigil.

Sousa believes it was a resident of the neighborhood who

fired the shot, a man who shouted at the protesters shortly after they arrived around 11 a.m.

"This man came stood out there and started yelling at us, saying we couldn't be parking in front of his house, he was going to have us towed... the usual verbal abuse. Then he went inside. There was nobody else around except for us. I don't think it could've been a random incident," said Sousa. An officer was called to the scene, but no charges were filed so far, said Manchester Police Lt. Kevin Kelly.

"Detectives are still looking into the matter. There was also a report of an irate neighbor who came out and yelled at the group sometime before the incident was discovered," said Kelly. "You get that sometimes. Obviously some people don't agree with why they're out there."

Sousa said last year someone tried to run over one of the protesters by driving a van onto the sidewalk. "This just reinforces our original contention that this place doesn't belong in a family neighborhood. It engenders too many emotions," she said.

The clinic opened its doors in March of 2002 after 18 months of battles with neighbors. City Hall and the courts.

Anti-abortion groups opposed the clinic, and some neighbors said they feared the possibility of violence. The Manchester Zoning Board eventually rescinded its approval of the planned clinic. But Planned Parenthood prevailed in federal and state courts.

Although Sousa didn't see anyone with a gun yesterday, she said she heard the shot. "It was about 11:30 a.m. when I heard this funny sound, sounded like a snowball hitting a car. About a half hour later we were finishing up the vigil and I went to put an umbrella in the trunk. When I shut the truck, glass shattered everywhere," said Sousa, who serves Manchester's Ward 4 as a state representative.

When she walked around the side of the car she found the passenger side window of her Ford Escort had been shattered. Police confirmed it had been shot out by some kind of pellet or BB gun. Sousa said the incident underscores the group's belief that

the Planned Parenthood doesn't belong in a residential neighborhood.

"What if there had been a pet in the car, or someone inside warning up? They've installed bulletproof glass at the clinic, even though they say being there is not a risk to the neighborhood. My window was shot out yesterday," said Sousa.

Attempts to reach a spokesman for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England yesterday were unsuccessful.

ps. It should be Kathy Souza, not SouSa !!