

**Beacon Falls Planning & Zoning Commission**  
**10 Maple Avenue**  
**Beacon Falls, CT 06403**



**BEACON FALLS PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**  
**Public Hearing**  
**September 24, 2020**  
**PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES**  
**(Subject to Revision)**

**1. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair McDuffie called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. and the call was read into the meeting minutes. Public Hearing legal noticed was published in the Republican American on September 10, 2020 and September 20, 2020.

**Members Present:** Kevin McDuffie (KM), William Gigilio (WG), Lisa Daigle (LD), Jack Burns (JB), Michael Rupsis (MR), Donald Molleur (DM), Patricia Hinman (PH), Tom Bunosso (TB), Robert Starkey (RS)

**Others Present:** Mike Mormile (ZEO)

Mary Ellen Fernandes, 5 Sharon Drive called a Point of Order stating that the agenda is remise and does not allow for the applicant to speak, it goes right to voter comments.

**KM made a motion to amend the agenda to include item 1a. for the applicant to speak before the board and public to present plan, seconded by WG, all ayes.**

1a. Attorney Ned Fitzpatrick who represents Lee Nemeth stated that Mr. Nemeth owns a business at 65 Lancaster Drive and he also owns number 57 zoned in the industrial park district. I am here on their behalf. As I mentioned in my application, we are requesting an amendment to your zoning regulations 42.2 and are looking for a permit to construct an indoor gun range within the industrial park district only. I emphasize that because I want to let the Commission and public know that we are not seeking to change the text of the regulations as it relates to other zones, only the industrial park zone. We are seeking that change to allow an indoor gun range. This would be entirely indoor. For a project like this to be constructed, the zoning regulations must be amended and that is why we call it a text change. We are seeking to add the indoor gun range as a permitted use. As of now, your regulations do not say if it is allowed or denied. We are asking that it is specifically permitted and if the Commission agrees and if it votes to allow the regulations to be changed and permitted, we will come back with a site plan. The site plan would show all the dimensions, the interior layouts and proposed usage, parking areas, drainage and all mechanicals associated with the building. This would include sound proofing and security measures. All of that I can not discuss tonight, because I am only here seeking the change in the text regulations. I hope that is clear. Section 8-3b of the CGS, states that a Commission can change regulations as they deem appropriate. You can change the regulations provided that the change requested is consistent or that you have considered the Plan of Conservation and Development. In your Plan of Conservation and

Development, throughout the document it is commented about how the industrial park area is an area where there should be commercial/industrial growth. The Plan also discusses increasing the tax base by permitting industrial/commercial growth in that area. For the record, Mr. Chairman there are specific reference in your Plan of Conservation and Development, from pages 39-50 there are many comments about proposing and encouraging growth in the park. Of course, this document is advisory and is used as a guidepost about development in the town. Also, Mr. Nemeth and his son Dan are here this evening. I would like to open this up now to any questions.

**2. KM announced that he has opened the hearing for public comment regarding the request for a text amendment to section 42.2 which would permit an Indoor Gun Range as a Permitted Use in the Industrial Park District at the address of 57 Lancaster Drive.**

Matthew Krieger, 159 Feldspar Avenue – I think this would be a great addition to our community. One big setback would be the noise. We have come so far with noise abatement technology, that I do not think it would be an issue. I work in corporate manufacturing and I know there are ways to dull it down.

Bill McCausland, 4 Coventry Lane – in the current state of affairs, there are a lot of first-time gun owners and we must teach responsibility. As a retired police officer and veteran, I find it hard to get in the car and drive to Bridgeport to a firing range just because of the locality. I know that if we have a gun range in town, it will get a lot of use. There are a lot of new and current owners in town. As a retired police officer and a disabled veteran, I believe in it 100%.

Michelle McBrien, 183 Concord Court – I am in the gun industry and I am an instructor. There are tons of people looking for training right now and it is hard to find a decent range to take them too. This would give us an opportunity to have a place where we can train. I tell my students practice is what makes you better. We need to give that opportunity and I, like Bill, totally agree with this.

Brian Blakeman, 16 Great Oak Road, Oxford. I am a police officer in town, and I would like to make it clear that I am here tonight representing myself and not the Town of Beacon Falls Police Department and anything I say tonight is strictly my opinion. I am an NRA certified instructor and I do a lot of classes. The people I am doing classes for now, say 8-10 months ago they never thought about owning a gun. I am a firm believer that if you are going to have a gun for personal protection, you need to be proficient. If we have a range in town it would be the perfect venue for people to go and train periodically. This would also be a benefit for local police departments throughout the area. The closest place is the Police Academy in Meriden. I am here tonight to speak in favor.

Mary Ellen Fernandes, 5 Sharon Drive – First of all, I think this is a great thing for the town. As for the noise, we can hear Oxford's gun range, so it will not be that much different. Most importantly, what I would like to find out is can you please tell me exactly what the text change verbiage is going to be? I do not see that anywhere on the application. Attorney Fitzpatrick stated that, the language would be indoor gun range, as stated in the cover letter. Some regulations refer to firing ranges, gun ranges, firearm ranges. My suggestion was indoor gun range.

Mary Ellen requested that the Commission look into the definition more to ensure it is not too broad. Mary Ellen stated that if we are going to change it, we should get it right the first time.

Paula Dommel, 15 Westview Road – are you planning on having a retail space? Attorney Fitzpatrick – yes, that is more of the site plan presentation. We are planning on presenting some type of retail space on the premises.

Paula - I am a mom in town and a firearm owner. I keep my firearm safe and shoot responsibly. There are a lot of first-time gun owners that are not very well versed or may not have much knowledge of the correct safe ways of enjoying the shooting sports. There are also self defense classes. You need to know how to use and store guns properly. I have

small children and I keep it stored and locked properly. There has never been an issue. I took my daughter to the range once and she absolutely loved it. It is a fun sport to do and a fun family sport to do. It can be done safely and should be enjoyed responsibly.

Dino Verrelli, 33 Kaleas Way – I just wanted to say that I have gotten to know Lee because we rented in the same building and I have known his son briefly, I have lived in town for 15 years and we talk about wanting business in town and if you look at what Lee has done with the property that he has purchased a couple years ago, which was vacant for many years, he has put a lot of money and invested his family into this community. These are the types of business owners that you want coming into the town. I think it would be foolish to not allow them to do this. Secondly, I agree with everyone that has talked about guns and training. Since March there have been 2.5 million new gun owners in the country. There is a lack of training and right now if you wanted to go to a range, you would have to go to Bridgeport or Wallingford or a private club. I would recommend that Lee and his family be allowed to have expansion so they could accommodate growth that this could bring into the town. Having a larger footprint for additional lanes in the future based on demand we are seeing across the country and in Connecticut.

Attorney Fitzpatrick noted that the reason the Nemeth's are proposing this, is because there is a significant need for appropriate training, retraining and certifications. Regarding sound, in other ranges when you are outside, you do not hear much. This will be a state-of-the-art building.

KM called for any other public comment. No further public comment.

KM asked Commission members if they had any comments. No comments from the Commission.

### **3. Adjournment**

Motion made by DM to adjourn Public Hearing at 7:21PM, MR seconded, all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kerry McAndrew*  
*Clerk, Planning & Zoning*