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January 3, 2024

Review of Shooting Range ordinances

Lieutenant Drew Heistand recently handled an incident where an individual was target shooting on their property, Deer Forest Rd. The person was shooting in two different locations. The first was location was "downhill" from his property the second location had him shooting over his neighbor's field. This is not the first time an incident like this has occurred. Lt. Heistand reviewed our current ordinance and he said that there is nothing preventing a person from target shooting as long as it does not or almost hit someone.

Lt. Heistand contacted the Township Manager, Corina Mann, and suggested that the current ordinance be reviewed with the suggestion that requirements for a backstop be added. Ms. Mann brought the issue before the Board of Supervisors and they asked that the Planning Commission review the current ordinance and determine if any changes need to be made.

I included our current ordinances which covers indoor and outdoor shooting ranges, but not target shooting on an individual's property. Lt. Heistand provided a copy of Hamilton Township's, (Adams County), ordinance covering Firearms, Firing Ranges, and Targets. This ordinance has a section on Backstops which I believe we should consider incorporating into our current ordinance. I also provided a copy of Hamilton Township's ordinance.

I look forward to working with everyone on this issue.

Sincerely,

Jason Test
Zoning and Codes Enforcement Officer

Township of Hellam, PA
Wednesday, January 3, 2024

Chapter 490. Zoning

Article IV. Specific Criteria

§ 490-118. Shooting ranges, indoor.

Indoor shooting ranges are permitted as provided in Article II herein and subject to the following criteria:

- A. A development plan shall identify the safety fan for each firing range. The safety fan shall include the area necessary to contain all projectiles, including direct fire and ricochet. The safety fan configuration shall be based upon qualified expert testimony regarding the trajectory of the bullet and the design effectiveness of berms, overhead baffles, or other safety barriers to contain projectiles to the safety fan;
- B. There will be no overnight accommodations;
- C. The applicant shall present expert testimony to establish that sufficient soundproofing shall be provided to render the sound of discharge of any firearm inaudible when outside the building in which the indoor shooting range is located; and
- D. All operations shall be conducted in accordance with National Rifle Association guidelines.

§ 490-119. Shooting ranges, outdoor.

Outdoor shooting ranges are permitted as provided in Article II herein and subject to the following criteria:

- A. A development plan shall identify the safety fan for each firing range. The safety fan shall include the area necessary to contain all projectiles, including direct fire and ricochet. The safety fan configuration shall be based upon qualified expert testimony regarding the trajectory of the bullet and the design effectiveness of berms, overhead baffles, or other safety barriers to contain projectiles to the safety fan;
- B. The firing range, including the entire safety fan, shall be enclosed with a six-foot-high nonclimbable fence to prevent unauthorized entry into the area. Range caution signs with eight-inch tall, red letters on a white background shall be posted at a maximum of fifty-foot intervals around the range perimeter. Signs shall read "SHOOTING RANGE AREA KEEP OUT!";
- C. All surfaces located within the safety fan, including the backstop, overhead baffles, berms, and range floor, shall be free of hardened surfaces, such as rocks or other ricochet-producing materials;
- D. The applicant shall present credible evidence that the sounds of shooting in the nearest residential zone does not exceed the ambient noise level;
- E. The range boundaries must be at least 500 feet from any property or street line and also located at least 1,000 yards from the nearest existing residential dwelling that is not on the same property and/or within 1,000 yards of the nearest R Zone. The range boundaries will be determined as a one-hundred-fifty-yard radius from each of the stands;

- F. There will be no overnight accommodations;
- G. Hours of operation will be 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; and
- H. All operations shall be conducted in accordance with National Rifle Association guidelines.

SHOOTING RANGE, INDOOR

A completely enclosed building where firearms and other projectile-type weapons (e.g., guns, rifles, shotguns, pistols, air guns, archery crossbows, etc.) can be shot for recreation competition, skill development, training, or any combination thereof. Nothing within this definition shall be construed to include hunting when conducted in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

SHOOTING RANGE, OUTDOOR

The use of land outside of a completely enclosed building where firearms and other projectile-type weapon (e.g., guns, rifles, shotguns, pistols, air guns, archery crossbows, etc.) can be shot for recreation, competition, skill development, training, or any combination thereof. Nothing within this definition shall be construed to include hunting when conducted in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

*Township of Hamilton, PA
Wednesday, January 3, 2024*

Chapter 67. Firearms; Firing Ranges and Targets

[HISTORY: Adopted by the Board of Supervisors of the Township of Hamilton 10-3-2016 by Ord. No. 135. Amendments noted where applicable.]

GENERAL REFERENCES

Open burning — See Ch. 50.

§ 67-1. Purpose.

The purpose of these provisions is the safety of all persons and property in Hamilton Township and to specifically create an environment where firearm users are using the best practices for resident safety. These provisions will make firearm safety a priority when using a firing range or target practice area.

§ 67-2. Backstops.

- A. All firing ranges or places where firearms are used for target practice shall have a proper backstop.
- B. An existing hill may be considered a natural barrier. Woods (wooded areas) are not considered to be a natural barrier as a projectile can find its way through trees and can be deflected in a different direction.
- C. If a natural barrier is not present a barrier must be created before an area may be used as a firing range.
 - (1) The backstop shall have a protective area with a minimum height of six feet and a minimum width of six feet.
 - (2) The backstop can be made of any material that will stop traveling bullets, including dirt, sand, and wood. The backstop cannot be made of a material that would cause a bullet to ricochet, such as tires, stones, or cement. Steel may be used, but only if the steel backstop is angled downward at a forty-five-degree angle so that any ricochet will cause the bullet to go into the ground.
 - (3) The backstop must be sufficiently deep to stop any projectile that may be used at the firing range or target practice area. The necessary depth will be dependent on the material used for the backstop, with a minimum depth of four feet if dirt, sand, or wood is used.

§ 67-3. Targets.

- A. Targets must be placed between two feet and five feet off the ground. The protective barrier or backstop must rise at least four feet above the target. Therefore, if a target is placed five feet off the ground, the barrier must have a height of at least nine feet.
- B. Shooting at a properly constructed target, mark, or a dead tree is accepted provided it is protected by a natural or artificial barrier; however, a properly constructed target, mark, or dead tree will not allow bullet deflection in any direction in excess of 45°.

§ 67-4. Location.

- A. Target shooting is permitted on property owned by the shooter and at formally organized gun clubs, provided the location meets the requirements for barriers and targets, as set forth above, and the following setback requirements. Invited guests of the property owner are also allowed to shoot, provided the same requirements are met.
- B. The target shall be set at a clear distance from any residential building, human work area, or domesticated animal ranging area.
- C. Both the target and firing stand must be set back at least 50 feet from the property line in any direction.
- D. The firing stand must be at least 50 feet from any structure, with the exception of sheds and/or weather shields used for the firing stand.

§ 67-5. Shooter conduct.

- A. At all times when a firing range or target practice area is active, there must be at least one responsible adult person 18 years of age or older present.
- B. At no time shall any shooter under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance be permitted on an active firing range/target practice area. Consumption of either alcohol or a controlled substance while engaged at a firing range/target practice area is prohibited.
- C. All firearms must be clear of ammunition before shooters retrieve their targets. No person shall be permitted to enter the area between the shooting stand and targets while any person has a loaded firearm.
- D. No loaded firearm shall ever be pointed in any direction except toward the ground or toward a target protected by a barrier.
- E. No person shall fire at any object except for the target(s) protected by the barrier(s).
- F. All persons shooting a firearm shall make sure that their target is clear, including behind and beside the target, before discharging a firearm.
- G. Each shooter is responsible for knowing the workings of his/her weapon and its capabilities.
- H. It is highly recommended that all individuals on a firing range wear protective hearing and eye gear.

§ 67-6. Exceptions.

The following acts shall not constitute a violation of this chapter:

- A. The discharge of a firearm by a law enforcement officer or military personnel acting within the line of duty, including, but not limited to, active operations, training exercises, and ceremonies.
- B. The discharge of a firearm in self-defense as legally permitted pursuant to the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- C. The discharge of a firearm to the extent it is regulated by the Pennsylvania Game and Wildlife Code.

§ 67-7. Interpretation of provisions.

- A. Nothing in this chapter shall be read or interpreted to conflict with the Pennsylvania Uniform Firearms Act.
- B. Nothing in this chapter shall be read as regulating the lawful ownership, possession, transfer, or transportation of firearms, ammunition, or ammunition components when carried or transported for purposes not prohibited by the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

§ 67-8. Violations and penalties.

Any person who shall violate any provision of this chapter shall, upon being found liable therefor in a civil enforcement proceeding commenced by Hamilton Township, pay a fine of not more than \$600 plus all court costs, including reasonable attorneys' fees incurred by Hamilton Township. Each discharge in violation of this chapter shall constitute a separate offense. A fine under this chapter shall not preclude Hamilton Township or any other injured party from taking proper legal action to recover any and all other damages permitted by law resulting from such violation.