



AGENDA ITEM #: 9

MEMORANDUM

TO: Metropolitan Planning Commission

FROM: Mike Reynolds, Senior Planner

DATE: Thursday, April 06, 2017

SUBJECT: Amendment to the Knox County Zoning Ordinance, Section 4.97 Standards for the Approval of Indoor & Outdoor Paintball Ranges, regarding indoor facilities as a Use-on-Review in the Agricultural District.

4-A-17-OA

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the amendment to Article 4, Section 4.97 (Standards for indoor and outdoor paintball ranges) and allow indoor paintball/airsoft ranges as a use permitted on review in the A (Agricultural) zone, as described in Exhibit A.

BACKGROUND:

The County paintball regulations were first adopted in 2000 and since then a similar sport, airsoft, has gained popularity. Airsoft guns shoot plastic BBs that have an effective range of approximately 47-73 yards and are considered non-lethal. Participants must wear appropriate safety gear, such as goggles and face masks, and are required to attend a training with the field organizer before playing.

MPC received an application to update the zoning regulations to address current paintball and airsoft business trends, specifically requesting that indoor paintball and airsoft ranges be permitted in agricultural zones as a use on review. The County zoning code does not currently list "airsoft" as a use type, however, airsoft and paintball are very similar recreational activities that sometimes share the same fields (or ranges), but not usually at the same time. While paintball guns fire a small ball filled with paint that bursts on contact, airsoft guns use a non-metallic, plastic BB.

Staff is recommending that airsoft be added to the definition of paintball ranges and that indoor ranges be allowed in the Agricultural zone when associated with an approved outdoor range. Staff is also recommending the standards supplemental regulations for paintball ranges (Article 4.97) be modified to allow flexibility in the minimum lot size for outdoor ranges, minimum facility size for indoor ranges, and buffer requirement when an alternative method for protecting adjacent properties is proposed by the applicant and approved by the planning commission.

Article 2. – Definitions

2.20. – Specific terms.

Airsoft range: See “paintball/airsoft range” as hereinbelow defined.

Paintball/airsoft range: An indoor or outdoor facility used for the discharging of paintball **and/or airsoft** guns for the purpose of target practice, mock war games, or similar competitions. Excluded from these facilities shall be general hunting and the unrestricted and nonrecurring discharging of firearms.

4.97. - Standards for the approval of indoor and outdoor paintball/**airsoft** ranges.

Indoor paintball **and airsoft** ranges are permitted uses in the CA, General Business, CB, Business and Manufacturing, and I, Industrial Zones, and subject to the requirements of subsection 4.97.01.C. below. **Indoor paintball and airsoft ranges are allowed as a use permitted on review in the A, Agricultural, Zone as permitted in subsection 4.97.01.C.2. below.** Outdoor paintball **and airsoft** ranges are permitted as uses on review in the A, Agricultural, CB, Business and Manufacturing, and I, Industrial Zones, and subject to the requirements of subsections 4.10.14 through 4.10.19, "Development standards for uses permitted on review," and section 6.50, "Procedures for authorizing uses permitted on review." Outdoor paintball **and airsoft** ranges are also subject to the standards and requirements of subsections 4.97.01.A and B. below.

4.97.01. *Minimum requirements.*

- A. A use-on-review application for an outdoor paintball **or airsoft** range shall include the following:
 1. A site plan drawn to scale that shows the following information:
 - a. Location of any permanent structures on the site and designation of areas for playing, staging, tune-up, and spectators.
 - b. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation, including points of access to the site, loading and unloading areas, and areas for employee and customer parking.
 - c. Proposed landscaping and buffer areas.
 - d. Location and description of signs used for directing participants, employees and spectators for the protection of their safety and welfare.
 2. A plan of operations which shall specify the following:
 - a. Days and hours of operation.
 - b. Procedures needed for the safety and protection of participants, employees and spectators, including a description of any safety

equipment that will be required to be worn by participants, employees and spectators.

- c. Procedures needed to minimize any noise, litter, lighting, traffic, or other forms of pollution created by the proposed operation that may have an adverse impact on the proposed paintball **or airsoft** range, as well as surrounding properties. This shall include the proper storage, maintenance and use of CO2 and other compressed air fuel stations based on standards adopted by the state department of transportation.
 - d. Number of employees per workday shift which shall be a minimum of one (1) employee for every fifteen (15) participants.
 - e. Description of the type of paintball **and airsoft** guns that will be allowed to be used on the paintball **or airsoft** range.
3. Prior to the issuance of any building permits, the site plan and plan of operations shall be reviewed and approved by the county sheriff's department, the county health department, and the state department of transportation.
- B. An outdoor paintball **or airsoft** range shall also comply with the following requirements:
1. No outdoor paintball **or airsoft** range shall be located within five hundred (500) feet of an existing residential district, place of worship, school or day care facility. This distance shall be measured from the property line of the outdoor paintball **or airsoft** range to the affected building or structure.
 2. No outdoor storage shall be allowed.
 3. Any outdoor public address system shall be limited to announcements regarding the beginning and ending of each paintball **or airsoft** competition, as well as announcements related to the maintenance of on-site safety procedures and regulations.
 4. No outdoor lighting shall be allowed other than for building access, parking area and signs. Nighttime use of a paintball **or airsoft** range may be permitted if in the opinion of the planning commission such use will not be disruptive to the surrounding area. In these cases, playing, staging, tune-up and spectator areas will be required to be lighted.
 5. A minimum two hundred (200) foot buffer zone between the property line of the outdoor paintball **or airsoft** range and the playing, staging, tune-up, and spectator areas shall be maintained. **This buffer width may be reduced when a fence, wall, or nylon mesh screen, or combination thereof, is installed and in the opinion of the planning commission, the proposed buffer and screening will protect adjacent properties and public right-of-way from fired projectiles.**
 6. A twenty (20) foot high, nylon mesh screen shall be installed to separate the playing, staging, tune-up and spectator areas from the two hundred (200) foot buffer zone. This screen shall be anchored at the bottom and secured

by a non-stretchable cable at the top and bottom. Two (2) such screens shall be installed a minimum of five (5) feet apart to separate the spectator area from the playing area.

7. The minimum lot size for each outdoor paintball **or airsoft** range shall be ten (10) acres. **The minimum lot size may be reduced by the planning commission when the buffer area is reduced and an alternative screening plan is approved in accordance with subsection B.5. above.**
- C. An indoor paintball **or airsoft** range shall comply with the following requirements:
1. The minimum size for an indoor paintball **or airsoft** range shall be twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet. **The minimum size of an indoor paintball or airsoft range may be reduced by the planning commission when associated with an outdoor paintball or airsoft range under the same management.**
 2. **An indoor paintball or airsoft range may be located in the A, Agricultural, Zone only when associated with an approved outdoor paintball or airsoft range and shall not be located within five hundred (500) feet of an existing residential district, place of worship, school or day care facility. This distance shall be measured from the property line of the indoor range to the affected building or structure.**
 23. Prior to the issuance of any building permits, a plan of operations shall be submitted for review and approval to the director of codes enforcement and administration. The plan of operations shall also be submitted for review and approval to the county sheriff's department, the county health department, and the state department of transportation. The plan shall include the following information:
 - a. An interior floor plan designating areas for playing, staging, tune-up, and spectators.
 - b. A description of signs used for directing participants, employees and spectators for the protection of their safety and welfare. The location of these signs shall be shown on the interior floor plan.
 - c. Days and hours of operations.
 - d. Procedures needed for the safety and protection of participants, employees and spectators, including a description of any safety equipment that will be required to be worn by participants, employees and spectators.
 - e. Procedures for the proper storage, maintenance and use of CO2 and other compressed air fuel stations based on standards adopted by the state department of transportation.
 - f. Number of employees per workday shift which shall be a minimum of one (1) employee for every fifteen (15) participants.

- g. Description of the type of paintball **and airsoft** guns that will be allowed to be used on the paintball **or airsoft** range.

5.22. - A Agricultural Zone.

5.22.03. *Uses permitted on review.*

T. **Indoor and** outdoor paintball **airsoft** ranges, subject to the requirements of article 4, "Supplementary Regulations," section 4.97, "Standards for the approval of indoor and outdoor paintball/**airsoft** ranges."



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February 17, 2017

Mr. Gerald Green
Knoxville-Knox Co. Metropolitan Planning Commission
400 Main Street, Suite 403
Knoxville, TN 37902

Re: Amendment to the Knox Co. Zoning Ordinance
4.97 Standards for the Approval of Indoor & Outdoor
Paintball Ranges

Mr. Green,

We have been discussing with MPC the requirements for paintball ranges in Knox County, which also have been determined to apply to airsoft ranges due to their similar use. In our conversations it has been noted that while outdoor paintball/airsoft ranges are permitted in agricultural zones as a use on review, indoor paintball/airsoft ranges are not permitted in agricultural zones. We would like to request that indoor paintball/airsoft ranges be permitted in agricultural zones as a use on review. In having an indoor option, the owners of paintball/airsoft facilities would have more options to develop their businesses to serve their clients. The use on review process, along with the other paintball/airsoft standards in the ordinance, would ensure that the county and general public would be able to provide their input to achieve an appropriate concept for the paintball/airsoft facilities.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information about the request.

Yours truly,
A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Scott E. Osborn', written over the words 'Yours truly,'.

Scott E. Osborn, AIA

Cc: project file

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