

**Pike County Board of Appeals  
Minutes  
June 18, 2015**

The Pike County Board of Appeals held its scheduled monthly meeting on June 18, 2015, at 7:00 pm in the Pike County Board of Commissioner's meeting room located at 79 Jackson Street, Zebulon, Georgia. Members present were Chairperson Ron Snowden, Vice Chairperson Brent Taylor, Bonnie Byrd Gardner, Meredith Sorrow, and Leslie Ratliff. Also present was David Allen, Director of Planning and Development, who recorded the meeting. Several members of the public were present.

- I. Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Ron Snowden at 7:00 p.m.**
- II. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Brent Taylor and seconded by Meredith Sorrow. Vote 5/0**
- III. A motion to approve the April 16, 2015 meeting minutes was made by Leslie Ratliff and seconded by Brent Taylor. Vote 4/0 (Meredith Sorrow abstained.)**

**A motion to approve the May 21, 2015 meeting minutes was made by Bonnie Byrd Gardner and seconded by Meredith Sorrow. Vote 4/0 (Brent Taylor abstained.)**

**IV. New Business:**

**Public Hearing:**

SE-15-07 – David and Ashley Reeves, property owners, and David Reeves, applicant, are requesting a special exception in an A-R zoned district to allow for a trailer / camper to continue to be used on their property for temporary housing at a construction site (building a permanent home on the subject property). The subject property, located on Old Meansville Road, has approximately 654 feet of frontage along the eastern side of Old Meansville Road. The property is located in Land Lot 200 of the 8<sup>th</sup> District of Pike County, Georgia. The property consists of 28.02 acres and is further identified as Tax Map Parcel #082 002

David Allen provided an overview of the situation, and Mr. Reeves was present to answer any further questions. Mr. Reeves wants to build his dream home on the property. His former home sold quicker than he thought it would, leaving his family with nowhere to live. He anticipates a 4 month construction timeframe, and plans to start building in about 2 weeks.

Brent Taylor said that she has visited the property and is satisfied with the situation there.

Linda Ramseur spoke in favor of the request. No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A motion to recommend approval of the special exception request with the listed conditions was made by Meredith Sorrow and seconded by Bonnie Byrd Gardner. Vote 5/0**

**Approval Conditions:**

- 1. During the construction process, only one temporary mobile home or travel trailer shall be lived in on the property.**
- 2. The temporary home shall utilize existing well and septic systems on the property when available. There will be no dumping of human waste on the property.**
- 3. Per Section 156.43 (D)(10)(b)(v), if the necessary construction on the home is not finished within 12 months of the issuance of the special exception, the applicant must obtain a renewal from the Zoning Administrator. In no case, will a temporary manufactured home or camper be allowed to remain for a period in excess of 24 months. The 12 month period will start at the date that the most recent building permit was issued.**

SE-15-08 – Steve Burge, Debbie Burge and Lawrence Burge, property owners, and applicants, are requesting a special exception in an A-R zoned district to allow for an outdoor, public shooting range (as a General Home Occupation). The subject property, located at 2734 Flat Shoals Road, has approximately 850 feet of frontage along the northern side of Flat Shoals Road. The property is located in Land Lot 247 of the 9th District of Pike County, Georgia. The property consists of 25.07 acres and is further identified as Tax Map Parcel #016 014.

David Allen provided an overview of the situation, and Mr. and Mrs. Burge were present to answer any further questions. Mr. Burge desires to have a public shooting range as a business beside his house. This will be designed for law enforcement re-certifications as well as average citizens that want to be better educated with firing guns. The firing range will consist of an earthen berm on 3 sides about 18 feet high. Up to six people can shoot from the firing line at a time. There would be classes mixed with the actual shooting times. Hours of operation would be Monday through Friday 9 to 6 pm, Saturdays occasionally, and never on Sundays. Per Mr. Burge, guns used would be 90% handguns

Mr. Burge spoke to the Board members. He also had a powerpoint presentation to explain the range. He said that it would be a safe, professional outdoor shooting range. He would teach people how to better shoot guns for their protection. He has already had 3 private qualifying events this spring for local law enforcement, and had no complaints. There is a need for gun training and nowhere to shoot locally. He presented his own sound study results (using a decibel reading meter on his mobile device). Mr. Burge said that there was about a 15 decibel difference between ambient (existing, normal) noise levels and the shooting noise level. (Mr. Burge used one gun firing for his tests.) He said that there would be two to four hours of shooting and about two to four hours of classes, about a half and half mix. He said that there would be no dark shooting, not tracers, no armor piercing bullets, and no .50 caliber bullets. The berms would be minimum 18 feet high and 40 feet wide and made of compacted earth. Erosion control matting would be placed on the berms to grow grass on them. There would be a 25 yard range for handguns and a 100 yard range for rifles (6 lanes, 6 feet wide). Mr. Burge is a certified instructor. He would sell the ammo to be shot on the property for better quality and safety control. As far as lead abatement is concerned, the EPA manual specifies no frequency for lead abatement. Eventually, he would like to put up a 30 foot by 30 foot commercial

building associated with the business. If approved, Mr. Burge would seek a one million dollar liability insurance quote to cover the range.

The Board has some comments for Mr. Burge:

What about bathrooms for the public? Porta Johns could be used temporarily. There is existing well and septic nearby that could be used if the commercial building was built.

The Sheriff has high insurance costs for his range on Twin Oaks Road.

Could automatic weapons be limited to law enforcement only?

What kind of handguns? .22 caliber, .45 caliber, .44 caliber

What if it was moved further west, closer to the Burge house and further from the nearby church?

What about using low recoil ammo? Would that help with the noise? A little. What about ball ammo? Less noise? Not much. Practice rounds would be 30 rounds per person.

There was a concern about using exploding targets.

From the audience, Beth Jones had some questions and concerns:

1. How many parking spaces? No parking on road.
2. Just limited to 6 firing stalls?
3. Maximum number of shots in hour? 3000 in 4 hours?

Keith Rader spoke in favor of the request. He is a law enforcement officer. He said that the range will be professional and safe.

Shirley Heard spoke in favor of the request. She has lived on Knott Road (behind Mr. Burge's house) for 38 years. This is a rural area with lots of shooting anyway. She would like local gun training for herself. When the police officers qualified there in April, she could not hear the shooting from inside her home.

Jeff Yearwood also spoke in favor. He operates the church directly to the east of the Burge property. He said that the range was a good idea, but the church has rights too. Some church members were worried. He provided conditions to the Director that he thinks should be incorporated into any approval conditions. He said that he felt like that if he had an event at the church and the shooting was disrupting it, then Mr. Burge would make it right.

Jim Ramseur of 4776 Pedenville Road spoke in opposition to the request. He lived about a mile north of the range site. He presented a petition with 60 signatures of people opposed to the range. He said that this is clearly a commercial enterprise, which needs rezoning. It needs formal development plans if approved. This range will diminish property values and he has documentation that it will. The gun noise will be heard clearly. Opponents of the range are requesting a Noise Ordinance be passed first as protection for nearby citizens. Mr. Ramseur said that Mr. Burge's decibel study is wrong. He said that lead poisoning is a concern, since the property is close to the Flint River, the Griffin Reservoir, and groundwater areas. He wants a bond posted for toxic cleanup if the range ceases to operate. There should be an environmental review process. Will anything be put underneath the berms to filter out lead? He hears the WMA and Red Oak Plantation shooting from 2 miles away. He presented further information packets to be distributed to the Commissioners for their meeting.

Teresa Chamber of 5521 Pedenville Road spoke in opposition. She has noise concerns. She is worried that the kids at a nearby bus stop might be hit by stray bullets.

Doug Lacy also spoke in opposition to the request. He had a concern about who would shoot there. This is obviously a commercial enterprise, different than private property shooting. You will hear popping gun noises no matter what is done to prevent it. People will not buy houses near the gun range. There will be thousands of shots daily.

David Weirman was also opposed. He said that it was a good idea, just not near his property.

Leslie Jones also spoke in opposition. She has owned property there for 40 years. She would be a quarter mile from the range. She likes Pike County's quiet atmosphere. Shooting in hunting is the sounds of the country, not like the concentrated fire of a shooting range. She couldn't sell home in future with the range there. There needs to be a Noise Ordinance to protect citizens.

Ashley Jones of 2374 Strickland Road spoke in opposition. She doesn't want to hear the gun noise. It is a good idea, just not in her backyard. It will affect property values.

Ellis Jones was opposed. He had property value and noise concerns.

Scott Chambers was opposed. He had noise concerns and asked about actual decibel levels.

Nathan Wilmoth was also opposed. He owns property on Pedenville Road, but lives in Griffin. He worries about being down range of stray bullets. He likes shooting, but indoors. He has environmental and noise concerns.

Board member Meredith Sorrow said that this need to be postponed until there were protections put in the Code (Noise Ordinance) first to protect citizens in case something like this was bad. There needs to be lead testing of the property now to gauge current levels.

Board member Leslie Ratliff said that her property was surrounded by unregulated shooting preserves. They were not excessively loud, but a stray bullet occasionally hits her property. She would welcome the terms of the shooting range.

Board member Brent Taylor said that she could see both sides of the issue and was torn.

Board member Bonnie Byrd Gardner sees both sides. Citizens need to express their opinions.

**A motion to recommend denial of the special exception request was made by Bonnie Byrd Gardner and seconded by Meredith Sorrow. Vote 2/3**

**A motion to hold the special exception request for: Environmental Review Board review, testing of current lead levels on the property, and the creation and passage of a Noise Abatement Ordinance was made by Meredith Sorrow and seconded by Bonnie Byrd Gardner. Vote 3/2**

**Listed Approval Conditions:**

- 1. An annual business license shall be required to legally operate. Repeated violations of regulations can result in a revocation of the business license.**
- 2. Any new business signs shall conform to the County Sign Ordinance.**
- 3. There shall be small safety (2' x 2' or smaller) signs posted at regular intervals along the front and side of the property, warning citizens that they are entering a shooting range. In the interest of safety, the number of these warning signs shall not be limited by the Sign Ordinance standards.**

4. All applicable State and Federal guidelines must be continuously met. There must also be proof of either: a) Completion of the NRA "Range Development and Operations Course", or b) Ownership of the NRA "Sourcebook" and c) Knowledge of the NRA "Sourcebook" contents and guidelines.
5. Shoot range / gun safety rules and regulations shall be clearly posted on the property and copies shall be signed by all participants.
6. The backstop (berm) and side berms shall be a minimum 18 feet high and shall be constructed to industry standards. The backstop / berms shall be oriented north to south, with the opening facing Flat Shoals Road.
7. An 8 foot tall privacy fence, surrounding the perimeter of the backstop and the side berms and extending on both sides to 5 feet behind the firing line shall be installed at the time of the construction of the berms. The fence shall serve as a barrier to bullets that may miss the backstop and will help prevent indiscriminate access to the firing line and the area between the firing line and the backstop. Safety signs, as per condition #3, shall be posted on the exterior of the
8. Vehicle parking shall not be located behind the backstop and shall be at least 50 feet away from the side berms and firing line area.
9. The shooting range shall comply with the EPA's "Best Management Practices for Lead at Outdoor Shooting Ranges".
10. Operating hours shall remain 9 am to 6 pm, Monday through Friday. Saturday hours as necessary, but only between 12 pm to 4 pm. Sunday hours are not permitted. No night shooting associated with the range is allowed.
11. The above listed conditions and approval of same shall be tied to the current applicant and not transferrable to any future property owners.
12. No expansion of the current range shall be allowed without further approval by the Board of Appeals and Board of Commissioners.

**Additional Suggested Approval Conditions:**

1. Confirm lead content as it stands now.
2. Add berm removal once every 3 years and disposal as hazardous waste (or at a certain level of lead in the berm).
3. Require lead measurements every year to be submitted.
4. Reconfirm hearing test with largest weapon (less than 50mm and a rifle).
5. No guns equal to or greater than 50mm caliber.
6. No skeet or trap shooting (no clay pigeon shooting).
7. Gate locked when closed.
8. Change hours of operation to 1 hour after sun up and 1 hour before sun down? minimizes danger of shooting in the dark.
9. No armor piercing bullets or exploding ammunition.

**V. Discussion:**

The Board wants the Director to ask the Board of Commissioners to allow the Director to administratively approve temporary housing on a property where a permanent home is being built, instead of having to obtain a special exception.

**VI. Adjournment: 9:45 pm**

**A motion to adjourn was made by Meredith Sorrow and seconded by Bonnie Byrd Gardner. Vote 5/0**