

Application No. UP-1061-25, Lafayette Gun Club: Authorize a Special Use Permit, pursuant to Section 24.1-306 (Category 9, No. 7) of the York County Zoning Ordinance. Request to establish an indoor firing range on a 26.3-acre parcel (GPIN S06b-4802-3797) located at 331 Dare Road (Route 621). The property is zoned RC (Resource Conservation) and R20 (medium density single-family residential) and is designated Medium-Density Residential in the Comprehensive Plan.

Jeanne Carner, Senior Planner, presented the staff report dated November 17, 2025, and recommended the Commission forward this application to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation of approval subject to the conditions set forth in Resolution No. PC25-26.

Mr. Smith stated that Lafayette Gun Club was established in 1950, and the standards for operating gun clubs were established in 1957. Mr. Smith asked Mrs. Carner if any improvements made to the facility would have to comply with current standards, and if the staff has any concerns.

Mrs. Carner confirmed the requirement for compliance with the current standards and expressed no concerns about the applicant's willingness to cooperate.

Mr. Brooks asked if citizen concerns about the berms and baffles have been addressed in the application.

Mrs. Carner answered that the applicant has not proposed fortifying any of the existing berms or adding any additional berms. The Gun Club has baffles on the existing outdoor firing range and they are not proposing any additional measures.

Mr. Wassmer as a former Board of Supervisors representative for District 4, stated that this property has a lot surrounding it- two residential subdivisions, a church, an autism therapy center, and Peninsula Harwood Mulch. He asserted that while the application for an indoor firing range itself meets the code, he will evaluate the measures the applicant is willing to take regarding the outdoor berms as the Commission deliberates.

Chair Chamberlain opened the public hearing.

Zev York, 312 Richter Lane, spoke as the applicant and stated Lafayette Gun Club is a members-only club. The club has about 2,800 members, many of whom are doctors, lawyers, shipyard employees, and law enforcement personnel. The Club offers courtesy access for law enforcement training and emphasizes safe handling of firearms particularly when other people are present. He added that certified Range Safety Officers (RSO) enforce safety, and the club aims to develop honesty, fellowship, and sportsmanship. The club works to build a sense of community by having competitions, cookouts, picnics, and camp outs with the Cub Scouts, as well as, sponsoring a junior division shooting team, members of which have earned full NCAA scholarships and placement on the Junior Olympics team. He noted there is a ten-lane indoor range, a 15-lane air gun facility, a 100-yard range and a 50-yard outdoor range with 24 lanes. Mr. York stated there is a full containment baffle system which was updated six years ago with a four-million-dollar investment. The club has a robust training program overseen by a certified training officer which includes a couple of days of orientation and a full day of classroom instruction. The club opens at 8am on Saturdays and noon on Sundays. The indoor range- the most popular range- is open 24/7. The outdoor berms extend about 40 feet in height, and regardless of a shooter's aim, projectiles will be captured in the concrete baffles, updated six years ago. The current indoor range is crowded,

lighting is minimal, and lanes are narrow necessitating the new indoor range. He claimed that the proposed indoor range will be state of the art facility with rubber-coated walls, better soundproofing, and better air ventilation. He reiterated that they do not plan to add any further fortification to the berms.

Mr. Smith asked with the addition of the indoor range, is there anticipation for more members.

Mr. York stated there will be no increase in members, beyond the club self-limit of 3,000 members.

Mr. Brooks asked if there are any plans to fortify the berms.

Mr. York stated that it is not in the plan.

Mr. Brooks asked if it could be in the plan.

Mr. York explained that the effectiveness of berm fortification would be limited. He said he doesn't know what the objective would be in this case.

Mr. Brooks said safety would be the objective.

Mr. York stated the club is in compliance with the code and meets those standards.

Mr. Criner stated the City of Poquoson is supposed to open an indoor firing range and asked if that was going to affect their membership.

Mr. York stated he doesn't expect any impact on membership.

Mr. Criner asked if the applicant had seen the letters from concerned neighbors.

Mr. York replied he has not and would be happy to look at them.

Mr. King asked if the Range Safety Officers were volunteers or paid staff.

Mr. York stated the Lafayette Gun Club is an all-volunteer club except for the Office Administrator.

Mr. King asked if the shotguns used at the range are 7 or 8-shot only and asked if "slugs" are allowed.

Mr. York stated "slugs" are allowed only on the pistol and rifle range but not on the shotgun range.

Mr. Titus asked if the club offered skeet shooting on the shotgun range.

Mr. York stated the club used to offer skeet shooting but closed that range about 10 years ago. He stated they designed the five-stand range to make sure all the bird angles and shot angles are kept within the range.

Mr. Titus asked if there was a limit on using "choke" on the shot guns.

Mr. York replied in the negative.

Mr. Titus referenced the neighbor's letters stating projectiles were landing in backyards and swimming pools. He stated a shotgun with a full choke can travel a sizable distance.

Greg Peterson, 138 Brandywine Drive, stated he is an expert marksman, a lifelong hunter, a graduate of multiple hunter safety courses, and was trained as a Scoutmaster to ensure safe operations of firearms. He declared that the proposal does not improve safety and protect the public. Since 2024, multiple police reports have been filed documenting bullets, shrapnel on their decks and bullet shells in pools. He noted the proposal adds an additional indoor range and relocates the shotgun range closer to residential neighborhoods. Additionally, he stated Special Use Permits are a privilege and Section 24.1-457 requires the protection of adjacent properties. He respectfully urged the Planning Commission to recommend denial or at a minimum, impose stricter measures including independent engineering audits of all ranges, permanent prohibition of target lanes that risk projectile escape, continuous monitoring and reporting of safety incidents, and revocation of the permit if any further projectiles escape.

Sandra Culver, 136 Brandywine Drive, stated her home is one of the houses that had shrapnel and a hole in the exterior siding. She stated she called York County twice and did not get a response for over a week. She said she had contacted Mr. Roane, who also lives in Brandywine, who assured her he would discuss the situation with the Lafayette Gun Club Board. On April 29, a deputy visited her property and she was able to show him the shrapnel on the deck and file a police report. She stated the Lafayette Gun Club has not been responsive to their concerns. Additionally, she stated the rights of Lafayette Gun Club don't supersede the residents' right to live safely in their homes and use their yard. Ms. Culver referenced another house that had holes in their roof which is in the inspector report. Additionally, she encouraged the Commission to seriously consider any plans submitted by the gun club and at a minimum, perform a site visit to see how close the houses are to the gun club.

Erin Tapajna, 204 Henry Lee Lane, stated she has lived in Brandywine for 22 years and serves as President of the Brandywine Lake Owners Association. She added that neighbors can see clay parts hitting the lake. She referred to a site plan approved by Susan Kassel, the previous Zoning Administrator, that had no Special Use Permit. In 2013 the Lafayette Gun Club was required to obtain a Special Use Permit for the driveway expansion and the addition of an educational building where socials and picnics are held. She said that in the past, there was open communication with Donald Streeter, the former president of the club, and she would call anytime with concerns, with the new president, this is no longer the case. Finally, she urged the applicant to start communicating with the neighborhood to keep the peace.

Dr. Megan McGavern, 100 Old Pond Road, stated she runs the horse autism therapy camp adjacent to the southern portion of the Lafayette Gun Club. Special needs children, their families, staff, and horses roam the property every day of the week. The camp has an outdoor sensory classroom, sensory pond, observatory, swings, and a mailbox that the children like to ride too. She stated that she is not anti-gun; however, she expressed concern for the safety of the children at the camp. Dr. McGavern suggested increasing the height of the berms because the range is being relocated closer to her property and is worried about children and horses being shot.

Karee Jefferson, 114 Holden Lane, stated she is in the Air Force, has a lot of experience with guns, and agreed with the previous speakers. She said she believes York County has allowed the

Lafayette Gun Club to grade their own homework and that is a problem. Additionally, Ms. Jefferson stated her neighbors have found various types of debris in their yards but noted the Gun Club has not been held accountable by the County. She said the Lafayette Gun Club continues to change the narrative and needs to be accountable to the residents. She stated the Lafayette Gun Club is decreasing home property values and urged the Commission to reduce property taxes because residents cannot enjoy their home. In conclusion, she stated Lafayette Gun Club has no strategic messaging, no narrative, no plan, and no outside accountability.

With one else wishing to speak regarding the application, **Chair Chamberlain** closed the public hearing.

Mr. Criner stated no one seemed to have a problem with the new indoor facility; however, residents have concerns about how the gun club currently runs their outdoor range, which isn't a matter for the Planning Commission's consideration tonight. He said this is a good opportunity for the Gun Club to listen to the citizens who have valid concerns over the current operations of the club.

Mr. King concurred. As an Army veteran very familiar with all types of guns he doesn't have a problem with the new facility; however, there have been some valid safety concerns raised by the residents about the outdoor range. He proposed the Lafayette Gun Club meet with the community within the next 30 days so they can get a better understanding of what is being proposed. Finally, he suggested that he felt the Commission should continue the public hearing to the next scheduled Planning Commission meeting. This will allow the applicant to consider the safety of the residents and provide understanding as to the integrity and continued operation of the gun club.

Mr. Wassmer stated there is a lot going on in a small area surrounding the gun club. Any time there is a newly proposed development, it's recommended that the applicant meet with residents to hear feedback on the proposal. He asked the applicant to take 30 days to listen to the residents, consider improving the berms, and address safety issues regarding shrapnel in neighbors' yards.

Mr. Titus stated he doesn't have a problem with the indoor firing range. For the outdoor range he recommends changing the use of "choke", to "no choke" to eliminate some of the shrapnel that falls outside the firing range. He agreed with the suggestion of giving the applicant 30 days to meet with the residents.

Mr. Smith stated the proposal is an improvement to the property and also an expansion. He said the proposal increases operations which could increase the citizen concerns. He expressed concerns regarding the lack of engagement between the applicant and Lafayette Gun Club's neighbors, and police reports that were not addressed. Mr. Smith agreed with the suggestion of continuing the hearing to allow the Lafayette Gun Club more time to engage with their neighbors.

Mr. Brooks added that safety is an issue for the citizens, especially because the outdoor range is moving closer to some of the neighbors. He said he has reservations about the applicant's statement that berms and other additional safety measures would not make a difference. He emphasized that safety measures always make a difference and those measures are necessary in this case. He agreed with the suggestion to continue the hearing for 30 days and even suggested 60 days.

Chair Chamberlain stated that as a police officer he is familiar with guns. He asked the County's Deputy County Attorney for clarification on what is currently being considered. He asked if the Planning Commission is considering both the proposed indoor range and the proposal to move the

shotgun range, or if moving the shotgun range is allowed without approval from the Board of Supervisors.

Mrs. Konstantinou responded that moving of the outdoor range is considered by staff to be an adjustment to the existing plan and is not part of the Special Use Permit application.

Mr. King reiterated the suggestion to continue the application to give Lafayette Gun Club adequate time to meet with the surrounding community for educational purposes and to address citizens' concerns.

Chair Chamberlain reopened the public hearing.

Mr. Wassmer moved to continue the public hearing until the January 14, 2026, Planning Commission meeting.

Yea: (7) Brooks, King, Criner, Smith, Wassmer, Titus, Chamberlain
Nay: (0)