

Township OKs gun manufacturer zoning use

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LORDS VALLEY — Kahr Arms, a major handgun manufacturer, received unanimous approval for their conditional use application Monday night by the Blooming Grove Township Supervisors. The firm intends to build a plant in the long-empty Pike County Business Park along Well Road, ultimately bringing as many as 80 jobs. Anticipating and getting a crowd, the hearing on Sept. 16th was relocated next door to the larger social hall of the Blooming Grove Firehouse. Numerous residents of Camelot Forest, a development right across the street from the business park, were in attendance. This hearing was restricted to the question if the proposed use of the property met the standards set in the Township Zoning Ordinance. Supervisors also had opportunity to place conditions, if deemed necessary, for the operation to meet the ordinance requirements and protect the health, safety and welfare of its residents.

••• Decided right away At the conclusion of the hour-long hearing, Chairman Randy Schmalzle said that the Supervisors have 45 days to decide on the application, adding, "it shouldn't be that long." Most everyone left, and the 7 p.m. regular Supervisors' meeting began a half hour later. Under New Business, Schmalzle suddenly announced that they were ready to decide. The motion to approve the conditional use application was passed unanimously. He commended their own solicitor and the presentation made by attorney John T. Steih, who represented Saeilo Enterprises, Inc. (parent company of Kahr Arms) for the hearing. He said that Steih covered every concern the Supervisors might have had regarding meeting the standards of the zoning ordinance and there was no need to place conditions. The Pike County Business Park was created over 10 years ago and has never seen a tenant. Schmalzle said that the park was designed for light manufacturing, and this is a "very good example."

••• Buying whole park He said the Supervisors have been very involved with the proposal and met with the applicants on site. The expectation by the company to buy the entire 620 acre park is a major feat, Schmalzle added. The company will both bring the park back on the tax rolls and create much needed jobs. Born and raised in the area, Schmalzle noted that there were 165 students in his graduating class; only about 20 remained in the area. He cited the lack of jobs in the area to keep people here. He said that he hoped that the arrival of this manufacturer would attract more companies to the park. Kahr Arms will occupy Lot 5; there are several more lots that have already been designed and approved for development, should Saeilo later provide for other business to come in. The company, Schmalzle said, will be eligible for the recently passed five-year gradual tax abatement under the Local Economic Revitalization Act (LERTA). Aimed at encouraging business development, the firm can receive a break on taxes for new construction, with the taxes phased in over that time frame. As presented at the hearing, Kahr Arms will be constructed in two phases. A 40,000 square foot rectangular building will be erected first, and later, a 20,000 square foot addition will extend the facility. John Borer, corporate counsel for Saeilo Enterprises, testified that corporate offices will locate here and firearms research and development will locate here first. Also planned are a retail store, web shop, light manufacturing and warehouse. Initially they will employ about 10 within in a year or so. Within four years, Borer said they expect to employ approximately 80 persons at the Pike County facility. Round-the-clock security will be provided. Borer affirmed this would include closed circuit TV monitoring and metal detectors operated by staff.

••• Realtor offers opinion Sale of the site is being brokered through David R. Chant Realtors, Pete Helms, Agent. Chant testified that it was his expert opinion that the project will be "quite beneficial" in that tax rates would increase, jobs will be created and the local economy stimulated. Employees moving here would build or buy homes, adding to the tax base. He gave his opinion that there would be no adverse affect on adjacent properties, and property values should not be hurt. He added that question can be asked again when construction is underway. No undue burden would be placed on the Township, Chant suggested, noting Kahr will take care of its road and have its own security. Joan Dingee, a neighbor from across the road, questioned if their area would no longer be classified as residential and would taxes go up or down. Solicitor Whitner replied that the business park is in the Multiple-Use (MU) Zone, and questions about future taxes are "speculative," Another neighbor, Vincent Coniglio, asked whether Chant is handling the sale - the solicitor replied this was not relevant to the hearing. Coniglio also said another realtor told him the property values at Camelot Forest would be hurt. The solicitor countered that this was here-say

and could not be considered at the hearing. Rich Gyarmati, a retired postmaster from New Jersey, said that in his experience, when a township embraced new industry, they thrived more. Those that did not, declined.

••• Wooded buffer kept Justin Hoffmann, Civil Engineer with Kiley Associates, pointed out features on the plan map developed for the conditional use zoning request. The facility will be placed about 200 feet from Well Road, beyond the 150 foot buffer required by the Township. The wooded buffer will remain in place. The site will be accessed from Well Road on McKenna Drive. Deliveries will exit on Kim Coon Drive. The building is about 80 feet from the McKenna right-of-way and about 90 feet from Kim Coon, greater than the ordinance requires. An on-lot septic system will be installed. Although the business park has its own central waste disposal plant, the waste generated by this sole business will not be sufficient to operate the plant. Ultimately, the plan is to be able to use the central sewer facility. Parking is kept within the area on Lot 5. The lot is 12.63 acres. There will be no explosives, radioactive substances or electromagnetic disturbance on site. There will also be no vibrations or light glare. Details of the exterior lighting were not prepared for the zoning application. The plant will not employ smokestacks. Color of the exterior will conform to ordinance standards. Surface or ground water will not be contaminated. Refuse will be picked up by a hauler. Hoffmann also said that the storm water plan will be included with the land development plan. A state permit for erosion and sedimentation is also pending. After the meeting, Camelot Forest resident Bill Hawkins commented that he thought the arrival of Kahr Arms was a "good deal." He said there shouldn't be more traffic or noise than they have now. He said he was not concerned about the planned indoor firing range or if there was one outside. He said he would rather see a company come in and pay the taxes on the park rather than have the rest of the property owners make up for it. Joyce Grabler, Camelot Forest, commented that she is concerned about the impact from blasting on the site, on her foundation. She is also concerned about her well water. Another resident, who gave only her first name, Margaret, said she is concerned about water runoff, noise and truck traffic.

••• Another hearing to be set There were numerous questions from the audience on matters such as blasting required to prepare the site, noise and storm water runoff. Township Solicitor Shelli Whitner, however, instructed the audience about procedures and reminded that these questions would be addressed at a second hearing yet to be announced, once the applicant submits a land development plan application. She stressed that matters of opinion, including whatever one may think about the product the applicant makes, were not applicable to the hearing before them that night. Chairman Schmalzle stated after the vote was taken that he expected the land development plan hearing could take place in mid-November or early December. The applicant needs to submit the plan first to the Township Planning Commission. Residents with concerns about such matters as storm runoff, noise and other site matters, are welcome to attend the Planning Commission, and bring their questions to the hearing that the Supervisors will schedule, the Chairman said. He added that the public may also submit their questions or concerns in writing, if they are not comfortable with speaking at the hearing.

••• About Kahr Arms Kahr Arms is a USA based manufacturer of high-quality concealed carry pistols since 1994. Kahr is known for designing the smallest possible package in four defensive calibers – 9mm, .40 S&W, .45 ACP and the .380 ACP. Kahr Firearms Group was founded by Justin Moon. He is the sole owner of the firearms group which includes Kahr Arms, Magnum Research and Auto Ordnance. Kahr Arms bought Auto Ordnance, maker of the famous "Tommy Gun" in 1999. Kahr Firearms Group is a \$75-\$100 million corporation which employs 250 employees between its Pearl River, NY corporation office, Worcester, MA and Pillager, MN manufacturing plants along with several captive CNC machine shops also owned by the corporation. He became the CEO and President of Saeilo Enterprises in 1992. Moon is a son of the late Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church. Restrictive gun control laws in New York State have been cited as a reason the firm is relocating corporate offices to Pennsylvania. Once corporate offices are transferred to Pennsylvania, the Kahr Group of manufacturing plants, operating at full capacity, will continue production in their current locations in Worcester, MA and Pillager, MN, according to a Kahr press release. The business park is owned by the Pike County Industrial Development Corporation.