

**ORDINANCE OF RANSOM TOWNSHIP,
LACKAWANNA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
ORDINANCE NO. 2 OF 2015**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE RANSOM TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE ENACTED NOVEMBER 15, 2001, AS AMENDED, BY DELETING DEFINITIONS IN ARTICLE 2, SECTION 202; BY ADDING DEFINITIONS TO ARTICLE 2, SECTION 202; AMENDING ARTICLE 6, SECTION 647 “OUTDOOR RECREATION AND SPORTS”; AND, ADDING NEW SECTIONS 647A, “OUTDOOR SHOOTING RANGE”, AND 647B, “OUTDOOR SHOOTING RANGE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS”.

WHEREAS, Ransom Township, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, is a municipal corporation organized and existing pursuant to the Pennsylvania Second Class Township Code; and

WHEREAS, the Ransom Township Board of Supervisors believe it to be in the best interest of the residents of Ransom Township to amend the Ransom Township Zoning Ordinance by deleting definitions in Article 2, Section 202; adding definitions in Article 2, Section 202; amending Article 6, Section 647 “Outdoor Recreation and Sports”; and, adding new sections 647A “Outdoor Shooting Range” and 647B “Outdoor Shooting Range Development Standards”;

WHEREAS, the proposed amendments have been reviewed by the Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission which has no objection to the amendments; and

WHEREAS, the proposed amendments have been review by the Ransom Township Planning Commission which has determined that the amendments will aid in the enforcement and administration of the Ransom Township Zoning Ordinance.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby enacted and ordained by the Board of Supervisors of Ransom Township, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, that the Ransom Township Zoning Ordinance Enacted November 15, 2001, as amended, is further amended as follows:

SECTION 1

ARTICLE 2 SECTION 202 “DEFINITIONS” shall be amended by adding the following:

Outdoor Shooting Range: A place where firearms and other projectile-type weapons (e.g. guns, rifles, shotguns, pistols, air guns, archery cross-bows, etc.) can be used for recreation, competition, skill development, and/or training.

ARTICLE 2 SECTION 202 “DEFINITIONS” shall be amended by deleting any reference to “outdoor shooting range” and “archery” from the definition of Outdoor Recreation and Sports.

ARTICLE 6 SECTION 647 “OUTDOOR RECREATION AND SPORTS” (Permitted Use: A-1, S-1) shall be amended as follows:

Paragraphs 1, 2: change fifty (50’) feet to one hundred (100’) feet

Paragraph 3: change one hundred (100’) feet to one hundred fifty (150’) feet and fifty (50’) feet to seventy-five (75’) feet

Paragraphs 5, 6, 7, and 8 shall be deleted in their entirety and replaced by new Sections 647A, “Outdoor Shooting Range”, and 647B, “Outdoor Shooting Range Development Standards”.

SECTION 647A

OUTDOOR SHOOTING RANGE (Permitted Use: A-1, S-1):

This section is intended to provide minimum standards to regulate outdoor shooting ranges and outdoor archery ranges (hereinafter referred to as ranges) in order to protect neighboring property owners and the public at large from dangers of wild or ricocheting projectiles and from excessive noise and other nuisances.

1. As used in this ordinance, the following definitions shall apply:

Applicant: any person, firm, corporation, or other legal entity seeking to develop an outdoor shooting range.

Backstop: a device constructed to stop or redirect bullets fired on a range.

Baffles: barriers to contain bullets and to reduce, redirect or suppress sound waves. Baffles are placed either overhead, alongside, or at ground level to restrict or interrupt errant or off-the-target shots.

Ballistics: the study of what happens to moving projectiles in the barrel and in flight: their trajectory, force, impact, and penetration. The study is divided into three sections: internal, external and terminal. “Internal” refers to what happens inside the barrel before the bullet or shot leaves the muzzle. “External” is what happens after the bullet or shot leaves the barrel and travels to its final point of impact. “Terminal” is what happens to the bullet or shot at the final point of impact.

Berm: an embankment used for restricting bullets to a given area or as a dividing wall between ranges.

Bullet: a single projectile fired from a firearm.

Bullet trap: a device designed to trap or capture the entire bullet and fragments as opposed to redirecting the projectile into a water or sand pit.

Expansion: any change to a public outdoor shooting range existing as of the effective date of the ordinance or any range developed and operating by virtue of a permit, that results in additional firing positions or a lengthened daily period of operations. Expansion shall also include any change increasing the length of the direct fire zone or the area of the shotfall zone in order to accommodate the use of firearms not identified in the then existing permit application. Modifications made solely for the purpose of or resulting in maintenance or improvement of a facility, such as the installation of sewer, water or other utilities, pavement of a parking lot, the installation of safety baffles, construction of side or backstop berms, or the construction or remodel of a clubhouse, shall not be considered an expansion.

Firearm: a term used to describe any gun, usually small, from which a bullet is propelled by means of hot gasses generated by burning powder (usually smokeless or black powder).

Firing distance: the distance between the firing line and the target line.

Firing line: a line parallel to the targets from where firearms are discharged.

Firing position (point): an area directly behind the firing line having a specified width and depth that is occupied by a shooter, his or her equipment and, if appropriate, an instructor or coach.

Firing Range: a facility designed for the purpose of providing a place on which to discharge firearms, shoot air guns, and/or archery equipment. "Firing range" may also refer to several ranges constructed in a complex.

NRA: National Rifle Association

Pistol: a firearm capable of being held, aimed and fired with one hand. Also known as a handgun.

Public shooting range: a firing range where a user fee is charged or a monetary contribution is solicited in lieu of a user fee, or where a person must be a member of a group to be allowed to use the facility and membership requires the payment of dues or fees.

Ricochet catcher: a device installed along a backstop, a berm, or on the range floor, designed to capture ricocheting projectiles. Ricochet catchers are more frequently used on backstop areas where the slope or backstop material does not positively contain bullets.

Rifle: a modern firearm designed to be fired from the shoulder with its main characteristic being a rifled (grooved) barrel that imparts a spin to a single projectile as it travels through the bore. Includes rifles designed for military or law enforcement use having a pistol grip stock instead of a shoulder stock. Also includes black powder and other muzzle loading firearms, some of which may have rifled barrels.

Safety baffles: vertical or sloping barriers designed to prevent a projectile from traveling into an undesired area or direction. Most often used to prevent bullets from leaving a firing range.

Safety fan: applies only to rifle and pistol firing ranges. The safety fan of a firing range consists of three parts: the direct fire zone, the safety zone, and the ricochet zone. The direct fire zone is that area into which all shots are fired during the normal course of shooting. This zone includes all directions and angles of fire used on a firing range while shooting at a specific target, either stationary or moving, from a specific firing point. The length of the direct fire zone extends to the maximum range of the ammunition and firearm used on the firing range, but can be shortened by physical barriers or other devices which reduce the maximum distance of a bullet's trajectory. The safety zone extends 10 degrees to the left and right of the direct fire zone and protects against errant bullets caused by cross fire or accidental discharge of a firearm. The ricochet zone is that area 45 degrees to the left and right of the firing line, and extended a certain distance dependent on the type of firearm and ammunition allowed on the range (i.e., 85 yards for air guns, and up to 1,200 yards for high-powered rifles). The line is then extended parallel to each side of the safety zone downrange to the intersection of a line extended from the terminus of the direct fire zone through the outer corner of the safety zone.

Shotfall zone: that area of a shotgun firing range where spent shotgun shot falls to the earth and where development, other than trap or skeet houses or the equivalent facilities for other types of shotgun events, and human occupancy, other than operators of the trap, skeet or equivalent facilities, is prohibited during active shooting.

Shotgun: a firearm designed to be fired from the shoulder with a smoothbore barrel that fires shot shells possessing a varying number of round pellets. Includes law enforcement and military shotguns which may have a pistol grip stock instead of a shoulder stock. Also includes barrels

designed to be used with rifled slugs, most generally having smoothbores, but in some cases may be rifled.

Target line: a line parallel to the firing line along which targets are placed.

SECTION 647B

OUTDOOR SHOOTING RANGE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

In addition to current NRA standards for shooting range design, the following shall apply to the development of outdoor shooting ranges. The planning commission may vary from these standards where the applicant has demonstrated that the proposed facility includes alternative designs and features, either natural or manmade, which will otherwise mitigate the potential adverse impacts to the health, safety and welfare of owners or users of neighboring properties, users of the shooting range, and the general public.

1. Application – Required information

In addition to the other information and data required for a subdivision and/or land development contained in the Ransom Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, the following general information shall be required for an outdoor shooting range:

- (a) An assessor's map of the subject property;
- (b) The types of firearms, ammunition and shooting to be allowed, such as trap, skeet, muzzle loader, high power rifle, small bore rifle, pistol, action pistol, etc.;
- (c) A site plan drawn to scale illustrating the items listed below. The site plan shall be drawn at a scale not smaller than one inch equals 200 feet, and not larger than one inch equals 50 feet:
 - (1) The property lines of the parcel(s) on which the firing range(s) are to be developed,
 - (2) For rifle and pistol ranges, the safety fan and its component parts with dimensions for all firing ranges; for shotgun firing ranges, the component parts and dimensions of the shotfall zones,
 - (3) All existing and proposed structures on the range, labeled for their intended use,
 - (4) The location and dimensions of all firing lines and firing positions,
 - (5) The location and dimensions of all target lines and related facilities,
 - (6) The locations, dimensions and slope of all backstops and side berms, whether natural or manmade; the volume, material and source of all imported materials shall be noted,
 - (7) The locations and dimensions of all baffles; horizontal drawings of the baffles shall be included, and building materials shall be identified,

- (8) The location and dimensions of all walkways,
- (9) All screening, landscaping and fencing,
- (10) The location of all utilities, including but not limited to electrical, potable water, wastewater disposal, and drainage ways, both natural and artificial,
- (11) The location of all lighting facilities,
- (12) The location of all roads, driveways, and parking facilities, including the number of parking spaces,
- (13) The location of all streams, watercourses, and wetlands on the property,
- (14) A list of property owners within one-half (1/2) mile of the perimeter of the property on which the outdoor shooting range is proposed for development,
- (15) The land use of all properties abutting the shooting range property, and,
- (16) Other information deemed appropriate by the Township Engineer.

2. Range Design Standards.

(a) **Pistol and Rifle Firing Ranges.** Pistol and rifle firing range design shall include sufficient land area under control of the applicant for a safety fan (direct fire zone, safety zones and ricochet zones) to accommodate the ballistics of the highest powered firearms and ammunition to be used on the range. Such geographic areas shall be based on current National Rifle Association (NRA) guidelines for shooting range design. Such spatial requirements may be reduced in consideration of natural topographic features or manmade improvements, including but not limited to, backstop and side berms, bullet traps, ricochet catchers, and overhead or ground safety baffles which will provide sufficient safety measures to protect adjacent properties.

(b) **Shotgun Ranges.** Trap ranges shall have a shotfall zone on property under control of the applicant as established by a line which extends 50 yards to the right and 50 yards to the left of, and perpendicular to, the centerline of the trap house. From each end of said line, boundary lines having interior angles of 130 degrees shall extend down range for 300 yards. Skeet ranges shall have shotfall zones on property under control of the applicant which are a complete semi-circle with a center point and a radius of the semi-circle being 300 yards. Shotfall zones for crazy quail, sporting clays or other shotgun firing ranges shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.

(c) **Security Fencing.** The entire perimeter of all outdoor shooting range safety fans and shotfall zones shall be enclosed with a six-foot (6') high non-climbable fence to prevent unauthorized entry into the area. Range caution signs with eight (8") inch tall red letters on a white background shall be posted at a maximum one hundred (100') feet around the perimeter of the parcel or parcels on which the outdoor shooting range is located such that each sign is visible and legible from the next.

The signs shall read "SHOOTING RANGE AREA. KEEP OUT!" The same signs shall be posted similarly on the security fencing surrounding the safety fan(s).

(d) **Setbacks.** Outdoor shooting ranges shall be set back a minimum of five hundred (500') feet from any property line and not less than one-half (1/2) mile from any residential building and one-quarter (1/4) mile from any commercial building. This limitation shall not apply to structures on the same parcel as the outdoor shooting range. Other range facilities including buildings and parking lots shall be set back a minimum of one hundred (100') feet from the property line and street right-of-way.

(e) **Sound Abatement Shields or Barriers.** Sound Abatement Shields or Barriers shall be installed on outdoor shooting ranges located within one-half (1/2) mile of a residential building or one-quarter (1/4) mile from a commercial building unless significant natural barriers exist. The applicant shall present credible evidence that the sound of shooting at the property line of the shooting range does not exceed the ambient noise limits set forth in Article 5, Section 502 of this Ordinance. All noise studies shall be performed by a professional engineer registered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or by a person with a degree in a discipline related to acoustics. The burden of proof that the proposed range will meet this standard shall rest with the applicant.

(f) **Backstops.** All backstops shall have sufficient depth of sand or other similar soft earthen material that is free of rocks, stones and other hard objects that may result in bullet ricochets. All manmade berms shall be vegetated to reduce the potential for erosion. A manmade, mechanical backstop may be substituted upon approval of the planning commission. All backstops and berms shall be maintained to perform their intended functions.

(g) **Drainage and Erosion Control.** The range and associated facilities shall be designed to keep storm runoff from the range site at a volume and velocity no greater than what existed prior to range development. Appropriate erosion control measures shall be designed and installed to maintain the water quality of the storm runoff from the range to predevelopment levels.

(h) **Watercourses or Wetlands.** Firing ranges shall be developed such that there are no streams, ponds, lakes, or other watercourses or wetlands located between any firing line and target line or within any shotgun shotfall zone.

(i) **Access Road.** The access road to enter and exit the outdoor shooting range and its facilities shall be of sufficient width to permit emergency vehicles traveling in opposite directions to pass safely, exclusive of the berm. The access road shall conform to Article 5, Section 517, of the Ransom Township Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance.

(j) **Parking.** In addition to all other provisions regulating the required number of parking places under this ordinance, there shall be, at a minimum, one and one-half parking places for each firing position.

(k) **Hours of operation.** No firearm may be discharged outdoors between sunset and 8:00 a.m., Monday through Saturday, and between sunset and 9:00 a.m. on Sundays and holidays. Ransom Township reserves the right to establish more restrictive time limits as a condition of approval.

(l) **Other Regulations.** In addition to the standards and requirements for development of outdoor shooting ranges under this ordinance, applicant must comply with all applicable NRA standards and federal and state regulations and requirements for development of an outdoor shooting range.

SECTION 2.

In all other respects, the Ransom Township Zoning Ordinance, as amended, shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 3.

The provisions of this Ordinance are severable. If any sentence, clause, provision or section of this Ordinance is for any reason found to be unconstitutional, illegal or invalid, such unconstitutionality, illegality or invalidity shall not affect or impair any of the remaining provisions, sentences, clauses, or sections of this Ordinance.

SECTION 4.

All Ordinances or parts of Ordinances inconsistent with this Ordinance are hereby repealed in so far as they are inconsistent herewith.

SECTION 5.


This Ordinance shall become effective immediately following its enactment.

ORDAINED, ENACTED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of Ransom Township, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania this 8th day of September, 2015.

RANSOM TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



DENNIS MACHESKA, CHAIRMAN



DAVID BIRD

ATTEST:



Township Secretary/Treasurer



JERRY BROWN