

Richfield on target for indoor shooting range

Plan Commission OKs conditional use permit

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RICHFIELD — The Plan Commission took aim at a new measure that passed with a bang Thursday evening.

The village's Plan Commission unanimously voted to recommend approving a conditional use permit that would allow a local business owner in the Helsan Business Park to install an indoor shooting range inside his existing facility. It would be the first of its kind in Richfield, and it would be a nice one, said Assistant to the Village Administrator Jim Healy.

"I'm an avid shooter," he told the Plan Commission. "I have never been to a range that has anything close to this."

Healy said that the village was approached by a local business owner who wanted to install the range in his building. The problem was that shooting ranges are allowed only in park areas, and the business park, despite the name, is zoned for manufacturing. Staff began looking around for ideas in what other cities had done, and found what they were looking for in Middleton.

"What we found was that, in fact, it was not all that uncommon to have these

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Range: 'Highest-caliber facility' planned

types of shooting ranges in an industrial zoned area and in many ways it is beneficial," Healy said in a village document presented to Plan Commission members. They also found a set of rules for the facility, including stipulations that the building must follow state and federal guidelines, have a security plan in place with the Washington County Sheriff's Department, and have clear rules and regulations to protect patrons' and others' safety.

Rather than make those part of the conditional use permit, the Plan Commission agreed to put them into village law.

"By making sure that it's in the code ... we (can) protect the health, safety and welfare of village residents," Healy said. If someone wants to come in and add another shooting range, these standards will already be in place.

However, Healy added, "If an individual were to come and petition with another business, they have no right to a conditional use permit." The business would have to go through the same process to obtain a permit.

Plan Commission members approved the permit unanimously, noting that the plans for the facility looked professional and attractive.

"It is the highest-caliber facility I've (seen)," said Commission member Ray Cote.

The measure will be passed to the Village Board for discussion and possible approval.

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