

November 18, 2021 EL Zoning Commission Public Comments – Viking Firearms

To the Chairman and Members of the East Lyme Zoning Commission:

I ask that you consider two issues regarding the Special Permit application of Viking Firearms and Training, LLC.

The first issue is that there is little detail about how they will operate. Questions that come to mind (this list is not comprehensive):

Given the proximity to schools, will those under 21 be allowed to enter without a directly supervising adult?

My father was an NRA instructor in the 1960s and 70s and I learned to shoot using paper targets. Will moving “targets” include the choice for “people” for the general public?

Do they expect to operate with 450 people at one time which is implied by the capacity limitations in the application?

Do they expect to turn their venue into a “destination” that allows buses from other locations as an “outing”?

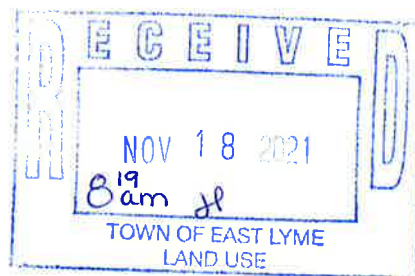
Which leads me to the second issue: Given the epidemic of gun violence and our gun culture, do we want East Lyme to become a destination attraction for this kind of “entertainment”?

Finally, we have to assume that those coming are gun enthusiasts and will have real firearms in their vehicles.

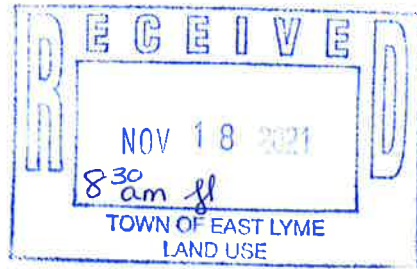
Choices have implications.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Lucira Jane Nebelung  
Niantic CT



William Mulholland  
Zoning Official  
East Lyme, CT



November 18, 2021

Brendan M. Cunningham, PhD  
90 Columbus Ave.  
Niantic, CT 06357

Dear Mr. Mulholland –

I write in opposition to the agenda item “Viking Firearms and Training, LLC, for a Special Permit for Indoor Recreation (Section 11.2.41, Retail Sale (Section 11.2.5) and Office (Section 22.1.9), at property identified in the application as 15 Industrial Park Dr, East Lyme Assessor's Map 26.1, Lot 2” slated for the agenda at tonight’s East Lyme Zoning Commission Meeting. The basis for my opposition is as follows:

1. Wrong Zoning Category. This is a venue for adult entertainment. It should be zoned under the “Adult Arcade” category of the town ordinances.
2. Proximity to East Lyme Middle School School shootings and violence are a crisis in America. Sandy Hook, Connecticut had one of the worst in American history. Children now regularly practice school shooting drills, something prior generations never had to deal with. We should do better. We should not place a reminder of gun violence so close to one of our schools.
3. Accidental Injury and Death Risk Even Hollywood, with its years of experience handling “safe” firearms, has numerous accidents from supposedly disabled weapons. The death by firearm of a production crew member on the set of *Rust* last month is a grim reminder that any firearm is inherently dangerous.
4. Felony Possession of Firearms Risk There are twelve registered sex offenders living within a three mile radius of the Industrial Park Drive address. Felons are prohibited from possessing even disabled firearms. There are inadequate procedures in this proposal to ensure that felons are not given replica firearms.
5. Conflict of Interest Risk There is a risk that a town employee will receive a second stream of income from this facility. State employees are expressly prohibited from this kind of thing due to the risk of corruption.
6. Oversaturation of the Market There are multiple alternatives for firearms training in the immediate vicinity.

Best regards,

Brendan M. Cunningham, PhD

## Bill Mulholland

---

**From:** Kate Day <minutesheep@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 17, 2021 4:23 PM  
**To:** Bill Mulholland  
**Subject:** Testimony: VFT zoning permit

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Zoning Commissioner:

We know right now that our children are bearing a disproportionate burden of the Covid pandemic. It has clearly taken its toll on their social and emotional health. We see it in how they are socializing in schools, whether it's in the rise in school violence or disrespect towards peers and adults. As community members, when there is an opportunity to provide a healthy space for children and families to interact, we should take it. However, we cannot rationalize that laser shooting and tactical training fits this need, especially given the current crisis. If anything, this could exacerbate the problem. Please consider not approving the zoning permit for Viking Firearms and Training LLC.

Thank you,  
Kate D.  
East Lyme Resident



Rec 11/18/2021  
LMM  
290

## Bill Mulholland

---

**From:** Esteban Garcia <esteban.garcia84@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 17, 2021 12:52 PM  
**To:** Bill Mulholland  
**Subject:** Public Comment for 11/18/21 Zoning Meeting

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

My name is Esteban Garcia and I am a resident of 10 Winston Rd, East Lyme, CT 06333. I'm writing concerning the application from Viking Firearms & Training LLC.

I have concerns about how this business is being promoted. According to news reports and direct quotes by the owners, it is being proposed as competitive socializing and it has been suggested that no live rounds will be used. However, the business name has "Firearms" which according to the ATF is defined as "Any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive" source: <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/firearms-guides-importation-verification-firearms-ammunition-gun-control-act-definitions> So it begs the question that there is a feeling of bait and switch and that there will be eventually be firearms sold or used in the facility.

Sincerely,

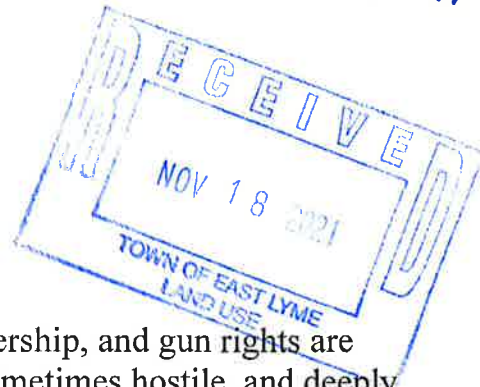
Esteban Garcia



Rec. 11/18/2021

Zoning Meeting 11/18/21

RE: Viking Firearms and Training



Conversations about guns, gun violence, gun ownership, and gun rights are complex and have grown increasingly stressful, sometimes hostile, and deeply disheartening. So, it is not surprising that a new business proposing a mix of entertainment and training relating to firearms has caused such a divided reaction.

Responsible gun owners who hear any hesitancy about gun-use may feel demonized and become defensive, and they have a right to those feelings. There are also many reasonable and responsible citizens who feel traumatized and want to see a reduction in gun violence. Safety efforts that were once common sense and widely accepted have been twisted in national politics for self-serving needs. Deep and painful fractures have divided our country, our state, and our town. Fear and anger have been perfectly manipulated marketing tools for selling more guns and we are ALL worse off for it.

That is evident in the way we project our feelings on one another through the words we use, the signs we wave, the decals we display, and the flags we fly. Our children absorb these messages and only time will tell the impact it will have on them.

Gun violence takes many forms, but domestic gun violence and gun suicide are of particular concern for us in East Lyme, especially on the heels of the pandemic that has left many people financially and emotionally struggling.

The zoning board and town leadership need to exercise wisdom and exhibit courage when evaluating Viking Firearms and Training's proposal. We should all avoid reflexively taking sides.

We need to ask critical questions about this business as proposed as well as what it could morph into.

We need to consider what we want East Lyme to be known for?

We need to weigh the potential costs of unintended consequences.

We cannot let a failure of imagination lead to poor risk assessment.

Some questions I want all town leadership to be asking themselves include:

Should the use of real-life modified guns be marketed in East Lyme as entertainment? Does this desensitize people, particularly children, to the lethality of guns?

Given the deadly serious nature of guns, would East Lyme be better served by a law enforcement only training facility?

If there is a need for safety-training and de-escalation wouldn't non-tactical training on topics such as safe storage, and recognizing the warning signs of suicide and domestic violence better serve civilians than an active shooter scenario?

When considering zoning approval, for a special permit, within a light industrial area, I want you to ask if our current zoning laws have EVER interpreted "training" as ANY type of training, including non-classroom physical training? And if so, are there ANY limits to the type or rigor of training -- or on its recipients? Are we in danger of opening Pandora's box?

My intent tonight is not to appear hyperbolic. I am here with my neighbors to present sincere concerns and to implore you to take the time to do the research necessary to be sure that you are making the best decision for East Lyme and its residents' future.

Thank you  
Christine Stahl  
Niantic, CT

## Jennifer Lindo

---

**From:** Bill Mulholland  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 18, 2021 11:46 AM  
**To:** Jennifer Lindo  
**Subject:** FW: Viking Firearms and Training Statement



**From:** Steve Luber <steve.luber@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 18, 2021 11:26 AM  
**To:** Bill Mulholland <billm@eltownhall.com>  
**Subject:** Viking Firearms and Training Statement

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear members of the Zoning Board,

I write in objection to the green lighting of Viking Firearms and Training. While I understand this is an opportunity for a large business in the area, run by three citizens of the town, I have to object for the following reasons:

The statistics are clear that the more the gun industry is regulated by a state or city, the fewer violent crimes and deaths occur, not to mention a drastic reduction in suicides ([https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/about/publichealthapproach.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Fpublichealthissue%2Fpublichealthapproach.html](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/about/publichealthapproach.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Fpublichealthissue%2Fpublichealthapproach.html)). While this establishment is dealing with simulations and not real ammunition, it still encourages the culture of gun ownership and use, which I would prefer not to increase in East Lyme.

If this were a truly fantastical laser tag venue, this would perhaps be a different conversation. But the fact of the matter is that an important point, even a selling point for this proposed establishment is that everything is as real and faithful to the real tools and training as possible. It is this training that is particularly concerning to me: **what possible need do civilians in East Lyme need for tactical training?** While it is within everyone's rights to learn things, this strikes me as entirely unnecessary. And, while the January 6 Investigation is ongoing in Washington about the strategic and coordinated plan to overthrow the Capitol, approving this would be at best tone deaf, if not explicitly detrimental to the community.

I want to encourage business, especially local businesses, in our town, but this does not seem like the right avenue to pursue. With my apologies to the proposed owners, I do not wish to have this establishment in our town, as a parent to two small children, as a teacher, and as a general citizen. Thank you for your consideration, and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions you might have.

Steve Luber, PhD  
2 Spencer Ave.