

## MAN AIMS TO BUILD SHOOTING CENTER NEAR VALLEY SPRINGS

By **Dana M. Nichols**

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SAN ANDREAS - The Calaveras County Planning Commission gave its informal blessing Tuesday to a proposed recreational shooting center to be located just north of Valley Springs off Watertown Road.

Businessman Tom Coe had proposed creating a clay target-shooting facility as well as ranges for handguns and rifles on 131 acres he owns there. Coe plans for the shooting center to be part of a larger industrial and educational complex with everything from recycling of lead recovered from the shooting ranges to training in industrial skills.

The hang-up had been the land's zoning. It is zoned for industrial use, and Calaveras County does not allow gun ranges in industrial zones. Coe thought he had been given approval and was about to begin grading in February when county planning staff balked.

A majority of the Planning Commission on Tuesday said they want to find a way to allow Coe to proceed. The commission directed staff to come back in two weeks with a resolution finding that the shooting center is permitted on the property because it is similar to allowed industrial uses, such as recycling and waste-transfer facilities.

The resolution also will say that the shooting center is similar because members of the public will go there for specialized services, just as they would to a recycling or waste transfer facility.

"I think the neighbors should be happy he's doing that and not putting in a rendering plant," Planning Commissioner Ted Allured said.

Dave Tanner, a Valley Springs resident who designed the shooting center for Coe and also coaches the Calaveras High School target-shooting team, said he anticipates that construction will begin this summer. That means it should be available to local youth shooting teams by the start of the 2012 season.

Bill Burdick, also a coach for several Calaveras County-based youth shooting teams, said that should further increase participation. He said one youngster dropped out of the team this year because of the long drive the team had been making to practice at a facility in Sacramento.

On June 16, the commission will be able to vote on a measure overturning an early planning staff decision not to issue permits for the center. Then, if nobody files an appeal against the anticipated June 16 decision, Coe will be able to begin applying for grading and building permits in early July.

"Hopefully, it's the catalyst to allow things to move ahead," Coe said of the shooting center and other plans he has for the land. Coe, for example, is developing a process to produce clay targets using clay from pits on the property. "We've got firearms manufacturers wanting to come in," he said.

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