



Sig Sauer Academy recently received approval for a project to construct a \$13.5 million Experience Center at its Epping facility off Route 27. [COURTESY]

## Gunmaker Sig Sauer's \$13.5M 'Experience Center' approved

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EPPING – Sig Sauer Academy is moving forward with plans to construct a \$13.5 million Experience Center at its Epping facility off Route 27.

The project received conditional approval at a recent Epping Planning Board meeting.

The new facility at 233 Exeter Road will have a combination of retail and office space, indoor training rooms, firing ranges and a Sig Sauer museum, said Tom Burns, senior project manager with TFMoran, the civil engineering firm working on the plan.

The new facility will have a 25-yard indoor range across 30 lanes, which will increase capacity for law enforcement, the military and the public, he said.

Sig Sauer's expansion plans in Epping come as the company, which has headquarters at Pease International Tradeport

in Newington, is also moving on plans to relocate its Dover operation to a multi-building, 210,000-square-foot campus in Rochester.

The state Department of Transportation has reviewed Sig Sauer's traffic plan for the Epping project, which is currently under review by the state Department of Environmental Services.

"We are moving through the state permitting process and are in good shape," Burns told the Epping Planning Board.

Aaron Williamson, director of operations at the Sig Sauer Academy, said the Experience Center is part of the company's five-year plan.

The plan includes a new indoor range designed to reduce noise; four new classrooms on the Brentwood side; a new outdoor 50-yard range; an extension to the Pro Shop; and the relocating of the Tactical Training facility.

The Experience Center is the

members present voted in the affirmative to give conditional approval.

Chairman Joe Foley observed that the proposal was more in line with what citizens expected when Sig Sauer originally came to town.

"We did not get a lot of tax revenue from the ranges," he said. "What they're proposing now is what the people wanted."

only part of the plan that was still awaiting approval, according to Williamson.

In addition, the plan for 2022-24 includes the possible need for a warehouse; renovations to the indoor pistol range; and safety upgrades to the older buildings.

Williamson said the Experience Center is poised to generate more tax revenue for Epping, from \$1.5 million to \$2.8 million per year. The center will also generate new jobs, with 16 positions expected to be added, he said.

Board vice-chair Heather Clark asked if the new positions would be "specialized." Williamson said some would be managerial, some retail, and some, such as firearms instructors, highly specialized. The pay range is from \$40,000 to \$80,000, he said.

Board member Susan McGeough said she was "reluctant" to vote for the expansion,

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No one from the public spoke out against the project.

Tom Taylor, Sig Sauer's chief marketing officer and executive vice president of commercial sales, said they expected to start the initial site work on the project in the spring. The company anticipates the project will take 12 to 18 months to complete.

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noting that over 15 years she has heard many Epping residents complain about the noise from Sig Sauer. But she and the other three