

From: Terry Somers, Mayor, City of Mount Hope, Kansas (tssomers1@gmail.com)

To: Local Government Committee, Kansas House of Representatives

Re: HB 2025; 3-Mile Area of Influence

To whom it may concern:

As mayor of the city of Mount Hope, Kansas, I would like to ask for the committee to consider maintaining the 3-mile area of influence currently being considered. Mount Hope is a small community in northwest Sedgwick County. Due to a policy change by the county planning commission a few years ago, the city is presently restricted to the projected area of growth as defined by the current comprehensive plan of our city. The defined area of growth just happens to coincide with the current city limit boundaries, which are approximately one-half mile from the center of the town. The boundaries to the north and east of the city are slightly larger.

In 2022, there was the possibility of a gun range located one mile west of the center of town. We were advised of the entity, but also told it was outside of our jurisdiction. There were concerns in the community about the facility's location.

One of the concerns was the noise from the constant gunshots of residents living next to the proposed site. In addition, a special needs school for children with serious emotional issues and severe physical infirmities, is approximately three-fourths of a mile from the site. The school is owned and operated by the Maize School District and offers services for surrounding school districts in the area. The noise from gunshots was a concern regarding the children, especially those with severe emotional challenges.

Another concern had to do with traffic. The entrance to the facility is less than one-fourth of a mile from the very busy K96 highway. An intersection just a few hundred feet east of an overpass, built over a railroad track, is very dangerous. The intersection is lower than the peak of the overpass and visibility is troubling. The median in the middle of the highway is very narrow at this intersection as well. With pickups towing recreational vehicles there is not enough space to accommodate those kinds of vehicles, creating great danger, due to the heavy traffic at this intersection.

The major concern of the city was the potential contamination of the city's water supply. The site is a large pit resulting from dirt excavated to build an overpass over a railroad track when the K96 Highway was expanded to a four-lane highway. Due to the depth of the pit, water accumulates at the bottom of the site especially when the water table is high. This is significant because the area is located above an aqueous bed from which Mount Hope gets its water supply. Lead from any bullets used by the gun users could leach into the water and contaminate the city's main well which is approximately three-fourths of a mile from the site location.

In this situation, under the current procedures, our city was the last to be informed of the application. Further, we had no contact with the proprietors. If the three-mile area of influence we in place, our city would have been the initial contact and set in motion the proper protocols for such an endeavor, including the county planning commission's requirements. Based upon our recent experience, there should be authority provided to municipalities within the three miles to preserve and protect the quality of life and culture of their community.

Sincerely,
Terry Somers, Mayor
City of Mount Hope, Kansas