

Village of Webster
Planning Board Workshop Minutes

Meeting Minutes of February 24, 2016

Community Meeting Hall
29 South Avenue
Webster, NY 14580

Present: Peter Adams, Judy Gurnett, Kathy Bills, Building /Code Enforcement Officer
Will Barham, Secretary Jo O'Neill

The public workshop came to order at 6:04 pm.

Peter Adams indicated that the workshop would be an informal exchange of thoughts and ideas from the board and the public regarding signage in the Village. It was previously suggested by Kathy Bills that we have a discussion on this topic due to a number of issues with current business signs.

Discussion points:

1. Current state
 - a. Some residents have expressed concern over business windows being covered with advertisements and signs, which block the view into the business and becomes a safety issue.
 - b. There was some concern over flashing signs which are not allowed on the outside of the buildings. There are also however, flashing signs on the inside of some businesses that flash out through the windows to attract attention.
 - c. We are doing a good job with main signs, but it's time to review signage and the zoning. The guidelines are just that – guidelines. They are not law, and business owners do not have to follow them.
 - d. When stores come in for their initial sign permit, the signs follow the guidelines and there is no problem. But then as they're in business longer, they add a sign on the door, or in their window, or they decide to change their exterior sign; and they don't always follow the guidelines/code.
 - e. Guidelines are not currently distributed as they were never approved.
 - f. It is difficult to navigate the actual sign code.
 - g. Temporary signs (ie. sandwich boards) have a separate permit which are reviewed annually. However, some are left out 24/7 and actually become "permanent" signs. They should be brought in when the businesses are closed.
 - h. Some temporary window signs become permanent (ex. The Art Stop advertising classes and camps).
 - i. We have a number of pre-existing, non-conforming signs right now that do not conform to the current sign code.
 - j. Signs are not allowed at all in residential areas, unless they are temporary.
 - k. Businesses do not need to come before the Planning Board for window signs unless they need a variance. They do need a permit, but the code doesn't specify the design.

- l. Businesses need a new permit if they are changing their actual sign, but not if they are just changing the lettering (ex. The Goodie Shoppe).
2. Definitions needing clarification
 - a. Façade – “the exterior wall and roof of a building facing the front line of a lot.” By definition, this would include the second floor and roof of a building, not just the business front. We should look closely at this, and adjust our guidelines to restrict the sign height to just the business front.
 - b. Business front – what constitutes the “business front”? (2nd floor starts at approx. 15 ft.)
 - c. What constitutes a temporary window sign – does this include flyers that are posted?
 - d. Specific definition of a temporary sign vs. a permanent sign.
 3. Considerations
 - a. Consider business owners and their need to advertise.
 - b. Break down individual components we want to consider: exterior building signs, interior window signs, temporary signs, hanging signs, door signs, flyers, etc. There may be some questions for the attorney as to what we can regulate and what we can't.
 - c. Can we devise an approval process with not only guidelines, but also standards we want upheld?
 - d. We don't want all signs to be “cookie cutter”, but they should meet certain standards.
 - e. Look at other municipalities and how they regulate signs. (Pittsford is very stringent with their sign code. They actually have an Architectural Review Board to approve all signs.)
 - f. Some villages have signs that are all the same, which can make specific stores hard to find.
 - g. Consider limiting the font size (not style) of the lettering on exterior signs, as size can detract from the actual business.
 - h. Consider maximum size/height restrictions of exterior signs – how is this determined? By a percentage of the façade? They should be proportional to the business front, not necessarily the building.
 - i. There are different zoning districts in the Village, which have different characteristics (NB, CB...). Should our sign code be the same for all zones?
 - j. Restaurants post their menus in their windows. We have to consider that when talking about window signs.
 - k. Consider what percentage of windows the signs can cover. Actual window size may be a consideration. Temporary signs shouldn't cover more than ten percent of the window front.
 - l. In the case of groupings of businesses (one owner with multiple businesses), it would be a different zoning issue. Their signs however, should be all uniform.
 - m. Differentiate between the actual height of the sign, and the height of the placement of the sign. May be difficult to gauge placement height due to individual buildings.
 - n. Some buildings have canopy's which affect placement height of signs. Signs could be on a canopy, above it, or both.
 - o. We may need to look at specific zoning requirements also.
 - p. What happens with existing sign issues? Can we make guidelines retroactive, giving businesses a deadline to comply?

- q. Should we have a color pallet in the sign code for consistency? Possibly different color pallets for different zoning areas?
 - r. Landlords may have their own requirements and stipulations. Can we approach landlords about sign code issues on their buildings?
 - s. Other “technical” issues, ie. The Goodie Shoppe has lights strung along its railing. Is that an issue?
 - t. We should revise our “Statement of Purpose” for the sign code. It should speak to the character of the Village, and set the tone for what is expected.
4. Desired results/Next steps
- a. Signs must be professionally made.
 - b. Signs within the Village should have some conformity and meet certain standards.
 - c. Exterior signs need to be proportional to the business front, and only cover a specified percent of the business’ façade.
 - d. Specify color pallets for signs in different zoning areas.
 - e. Specify requirements for window signs, including guidelines that all businesses must have transparent windows.
 - f. Street numbers should be mandatory for businesses; of a specified height and contrasting in color to the rest of the building.
 - g. Design a pamphlet describing sign guidelines to educate business owners on what is acceptable and what is not, possibly including photo examples.
 - h. Determine what changes need to be retroactive, and any deadlines there will be for businesses to comply.
 - i. Revise our guidelines and sign code to include desired changes.

P. Adams asked Jo O’Neill to provide copies of the sign codes for East Rochester, Fairport, Pittsford and Penfield, and email them to the board. He then added that we should schedule another workshop to discuss the sign code further. Since there is nothing on the agenda for the Planning Board Meeting on March 3, 2016, we will schedule a workshop for that day instead.

The next Planning Board Workshop is scheduled for 7:30pm on March 3, 2016.

Meeting ended at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jo O’Neill
Deputy Clerk