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FEATURED

NORTHVILLE

Northville business owners upset about sign enforcement

By Greg Hitchcock

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William Coffey stands beside his business sign blocks away from his studio on 3rd Street in Northville Friday.

Greg Hitchcock

Village business owners are expressing their frustrations over a local law that prohibits them from putting up signs on public spaces adjacent to their shops.

“People have a hard time seeing us from Main Street. We had a sign down on the corner, a sandwich board, we were told to get rid of that,” Bob Peck of the Flower Barn Gift Shop said.

Peck criticized the village for not enforcing the law earlier and said the current enforcement is problematic.

The village’s Zoning and Subdivision Law states that no freestanding sign shall be erected or maintained within the right-of-way, nor within 10 feet of the roadbed of any public street or highway.

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The law defines a roadbed as the trafficable portion of a road, street, or highway, bounded on either side by the outer edge of the shoulder or guardrail, whichever extends farthest. Where there is no shoulder or guardrail, there shall be deemed to be a shoulder extending four feet from the outer edge of the pavement or unpaved traffic lanes.

Mayor Sue Eckert said it’s important to enforce existing zoning laws and to follow due process if the public wished to change or amend existing laws.

“The process is that the Planning Board discusses it and puts a recommendation forth to the Village Board,” Eckert said.

“We will enforce our laws, because if we’re not going to enforce them, what’s the sense of having them?” she said.



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By Ameara Ditsche

Sally Peck, owner of the Flower Barn Gift Shop on 132 Division St., said she is frustrated with the enforcement of sign laws, which she believes should be replaced with constructive solutions like a directory on Main Street.

“We all made it through COVID, we all struggle to pay our bills, and it’s an aggravation we don’t need,” Peck said. “We are Northville.”

Peck advocated for amending rather than enforcing the law with a heavy hand and said cooperation and understanding of the community’s unique character should be emphasized.

“I’ve seen an influx of people I’ve never seen before, in great numbers that I’ve never seen before. They need to know where everything is,” she said.

William Coffey, whose business William Coffey Studio is at Reed and 3rd streets, has a dispute with the village over the placement of his business sign. The village ordered him to move the sign from the grass terrace, which is village property, to the funeral home’s property three blocks away at the corner of 3rd and Bridge streets.



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By Charles Erickson

“I want a variance to get permission to use that piece of land, being that I’m one of the few businesses that’s not on Bridge Street or Main Street,” Coffey said.

The Village Board referred the case to the Planning Board, with a Planning Board meeting scheduled for Monday, Nov. 25. Coffey was issued a court citation for non-compliance.

“The village decided it wasn’t moving fast enough,” he said of removing his sign.

The issue of sign enforcement began with an incident, according to Coffey, in which a building had high grass on the terrace garden blocking the view. A woman pulled out, and she almost had an accident, so she wrote a letter to the village.



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By Tyler A. McNeil

Molly Zulo, the owner of ADK Blend, said, despite knowing the sign cannot be placed on the roadside, she moved it back to comply with the rules, believing it would help more locals discover her business.

“I feel if it’s our property we have to maintain the terrace and take care of it. So why can’t we put on it what we want to?” she said.

She said that the zoning law is more of a nuisance than a significant concern, especially compared to other issues.

Kerry O’Hara of Adirondack Country Store said that signs are crucial for attracting customers but are restricted by current laws, mentioning that customers often can’t find her store — located in a Victorian home, due to overgrown trees and the store’s discreet location.

“We support everything in the town, in the village, the kids’ sports programs, anything going on at the school, any fundraisers,” she said. “ We are the first to step up and in order to make money, to be able to support these things, we need people to know we’re here.”

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Greg Hitchcock

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