

# Business owners express concerns over 'sandwich board' sign status

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

Village of Lewiston business owners expressed their concerns over proposed "sandwich board" sign regulations at a meeting Tuesday with Mayor Anne Welch and Upward Niagara Chamber of Commerce President Jennifer Pauly.

Municipal trustees, who set a June 20 public hearing, are collecting input on the oft-debated markers. Initial codebook changes were introduced at a Planning Commission meeting last week, and then abridged by Welch prior to Monday's monthly Village Board meeting.

Though the proposed changes in the law actually permit "sandwich board" signs, the move to reinforce the rule comes on the heels of three years of relaxed enforcement during the pandemic.

"We feel that you should be allowed to have something, if you need it for your business – and I know there's a couple of businesses that are not right on Center Street and don't get the visibility that Center Street businesses get. So that being said, I think what we really want to do is just have you

come in and apply for a 'sandwich board' and the placement," Welch said. "Like in front of Brewed & Bottled, you have like a small garden area there. If you put the 'sandwich board' there, off the sidewalk, then it doesn't impede everybody on the sidewalk."

She explained, "We have to really know who's getting the 'sandwich board' and where it's going to be placed, so it's not all willy-nilly all the way up the street, where people are dodging back and forth trying to maneuver...."

"It's not that we don't want to help you. It's just that, right now, our code says no 'sandwich boards' are allowed.

"And in everything in the code, if you can't live by our code, there's always the appeal procedure. And you come in and say, 'I really need this because,' and it will be dealt with like that.

"It's not that we're not going to allow them, but we have to make a way around it. ... We have to have some kind of control so it doesn't get out of control."

For businesses looking to use a "sandwich board" for marketing, "You just have to go through

the Planning Commission," Welch said. "You come in, you fill out a sign application like you do for your building. And then it goes to the board meetings. You say, 'Look, I really need this sign. I can put it here and there.' And then they take a look at it.

"It has to be a case-by-case basis, because we don't want 1,000 signs. So, if you have that visibility, and you really don't need the sign, then you're probably not going to get it."

## Business Owner Concerns

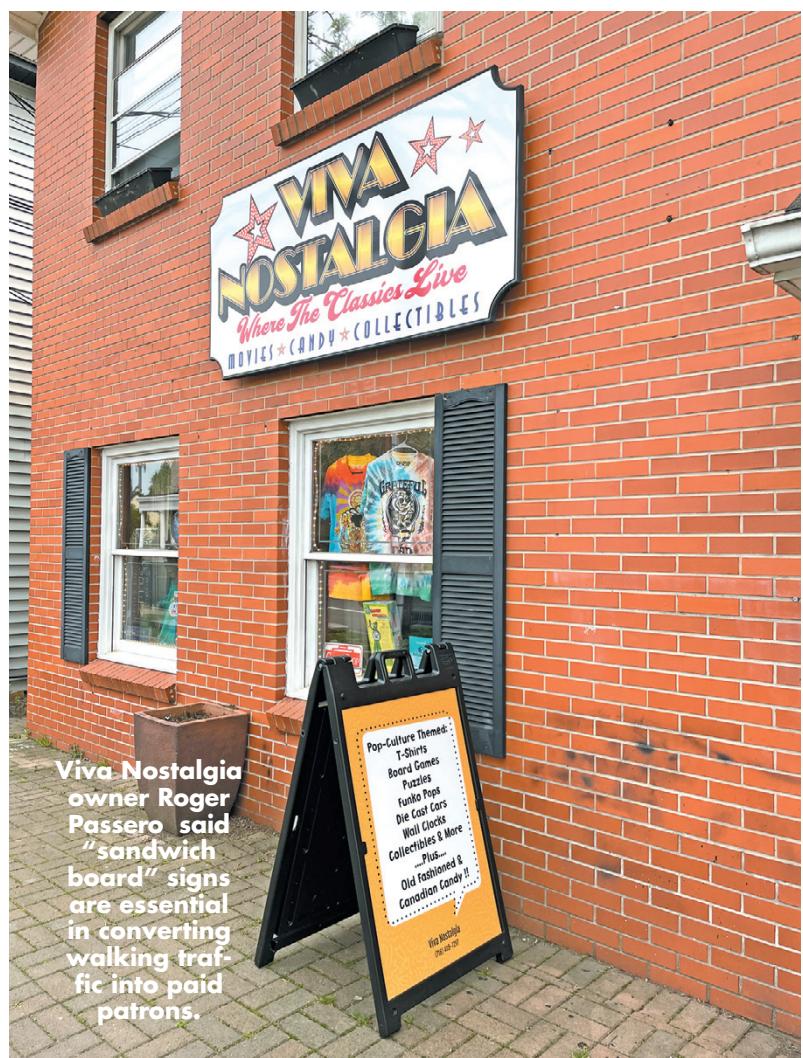
Viva Nostalgia owner Roger Passero said, "With all due respect to you and to anyone on the board that is talking about this, I don't think that you guys know really what goes on in our daily businesses every day. Everyone, every store in Lewiston, could use a 'sandwich board.'

He said these signs provide extra details to people walking by and on the fence about stopping inside a store.

"You have no idea how hard it is to get people into our stores. And it's not because our stores are not good. It's the attitude towards retail, brick-and-mortar business that a high percentage of people have," Passero said. "It's so hard to get people to even care that they're even passing stores, because they're there to go to the Brickyard, or they're there to go to the water, or they're there to just go to the Village (Bake Shoppe) – and they almost run past our stores. ... Younger people are looking at their phones and they're saying, 'Well, if I really need anything, I'm just gonna go online and buy it, regardless.' They don't even know what's in the stores."

He added, "The percentage of people that we get to actually come in our stores, versus the number of people you see walking around Lewiston, is deceptive – if you don't know. And I can't expect you, or anybody on the board, to really know, because you're not sitting there every day; you're not watching."

Brewed & Bottled Craft Beer Shop owner Chris Budde said, "Everybody is in the same position. We're not doing what we did four or five years ago. It hurts. And I feel like something like this, to pop up, almost felt like our faces were being rubbed in it. Instead of having everybody come in and talk to everybody, 'Hey guys,



Viva Nostalgia owner Roger Passero said "sandwich board" signs are essential in converting walking traffic into paid patrons.

we're going to be adjusting this code. What do you guys feel? ... Most of us read about this in The Sentinel. We could've been told to be there during that (Planning Commission) meeting. I think that would've been maybe softer and felt a little better for all of us."

He added, "There seems to be a little bit of a double-standard where you've got restaurants that can put tables and chairs and a firepit and a couch across a sidewalk."

Welch said Gather, the business in question, was granted permission by the New York State Department of Transportation for those outside amenities.

Town of Lewiston Clerk Donna Garfinkel, whose husband, Neil, runs Sgt. Peppers Hot Sauces, Etc., said, "Many of our businesses have come to the Village Board meetings several times, and discussed this several times. And it just seems like it's a struggle all the time. ....

"When we met with you the one time, you said that you were going to reach out to all the stores that

already had the A-frames out, discuss if we should all be a pattern, stay the same size. And then that never happened."

Welch said, "That's why this is all coming about now, because we have to change our code, because it doesn't allow any 'sandwich boards.' So, this is why (there's a) public hearing, why we are trying to put this law together, then maybe everybody have a uniform-sized sign and the placement of them.

"But we can't just say, 'OK, now you can all have "sandwich boards." ' You're going to have to come in and apply for it, and say this is where we want to put it, so we can deal with it and have some sort of control; so there isn't 'sandwich boards' all up and down the street, where people have to call and complain saying, 'You know, I have to go around this sign all the time.'"

Welch said, "We're not saying that you're not going to be able to get one."

Inspirations on Canvas owner Kathy Pignatara said her store has

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