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Village of Lewiston to hold public hearing on 'sandwich board' sign laws

Business owners again express concern, frustration over process

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

"Sandwich board" signs will again be discussed by elected leaders in the Village of Lewiston, when the Board of Trustees hosts a public hearing at 6 p.m. Tuesday, June 20, at the Red Brick Municipal Building, 145 N. Fourth St.

The current text of a new proposed law is at right.

"Sandwich board" sign regulations were relaxed during the pandemic.

Though Mayor Anne Welch and Planning Commission Chairman Norm Machelor and Vice Chairwoman Doreen Albee said the intent of the new law is to allow "sandwich board" signs in certain circumstances, business owners are concerned curtailing the outside marketing will hinder their ability to draw in passersby.

At this past Monday's Planning Board meeting, Center Street resident and Fine Antiques owner Ron Craft said that, when he moved here in 2005, "We had plenty of retail. Now, we have hardly any. I have people come into my shop (and ask), 'Where are the shops?' They don't want to drink. They don't want to listen

to a band. Parking is gone. The shops are gone. Now, you're going to turn around and put something else on the shop owners that are here, when it's hard enough to make a living."

He added, "When you have visitors, and you have specialties, you've got to have something to draw them into the shop."



Village of Lewiston businesses are fighting to keep "sandwich board" signs as part of their marketing.

Viva Nostalgia owner Roger Passero reiterated his recently published concerns.

"The problem, some of it, is that everybody doesn't know, really, what's going on. ... You can't possibly really know what's going on with the business people," he said.

SEE LEWISTON, continued on Page 3

Local Law #15-2023 – amend Section 13 Sign Regulations to read:

B. Definitions

Change number 25 to:

"Sandwich Board Sign" – a hinged freestanding sign that is composed of two sign faces diverging at an angle of no more than 45 degrees from their adjoined edge. Previous text was "Sandwich board sign" – a hinged freestanding sign of any size, unattached to any building or ground surface and which opens in an "A" shape, whether professionally designed and manufactured or created or designed in any freehand style.

C. Prohibited Signs

Item 13 – No sandwich board signs of any size, shape or design shall be permitted within the public right-of-way of village streets, nor on private property.

The New York State Department of Transportation does not allow Sandwich Board signs within the public right of way of village streets. The requirements of item 13 may only be waived for signs located on private property upon review and approval of a special use permit by the Planning Board.

A conditional approval of a sandwich board sign and its specific location may be made if its use is supported by evidence presented to the Planning Board by the owner of the business for which said exception is requested showing that, because of topography, some other physical condition, or extenuating circumstances, enforcement of this section would create an unusual and undue hardship. Evidence of insurance coverage for the sign must be submitted with the application.

If approved, the use of one Sandwich Board sign would be allowed for a one-year period and it would not be counted towards the allowed signage.

The sign must be non-illuminated, not exceed 8 square feet in area and 4 feet in height and have nothing attached to it. It must be brought in by dusk and not put out until dawn and be sufficiently secure to prevent movement from the wind. Any weights or cords used with the sign must also be taken in with the sign. Placement will not obstruct free egress from a window, door, or a fire escape and will not interfere with vehicular or pedestrian access or visibility.

The use of a Sandwich Board sign is a privilege not a right. Failure to comply with the requirements detailed above will result in the revocation of the special use permit."

(Paragraph breaks added for clarity.)

Wheatfield veterans plan summer event



The Wheatfield Veterans summer event takes place from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. on July 1 at the Wheatfield Veterans Monument, 2800 Church Road. The event will feature military vehicles, fire engines, an on-site Huey helicopter and an Army tank, a food truck, an ice cream truck, and an opportunity for informal meet-and-greets with Wheatfield town officials, firefighters, veterans and representatives of the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station and the Niagara County Sheriff's Office. (Contributed photos)

BY KAREN CARR KEEFE

Senior Contributing Writer

The Wheatfield Veterans Memorial will be the setting Saturday, July 1, for a special summer event that features Army trucks and fire engines from all five

Wheatfield fire companies.

The veterans summer event will take place from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Wheatfield Town Hall Campus, 2800 Church Road. It is free and open to the public.

SEE EVENT, continued on Page 2

Property values under microscope in Town of Niagara

BY TIMOTHY CHIPP

Contributing Writer

Town of Niagara officials are pondering a dirty word in government this summer that, if implemented, could have a big effect for years to come.

Reassessment may be in the near future, after town officials met with F. Cindy Baire, partner and co-president of GAR Associates, a real estate appraisal and analysis firm out of Williamsville.

Baire, along with Town Assessor James Bird, presented to town officials during Wednesday's work session, informing them their assessments are entirely out of whack given the state of the housing and commercial real estate markets both locally and nationally.

"It's not a pretty word," Supervisor Lee Wallace said. "People don't like it."

How bad? The town is currently estimating land values at about

37% of the market rate when it comes to its property taxes.

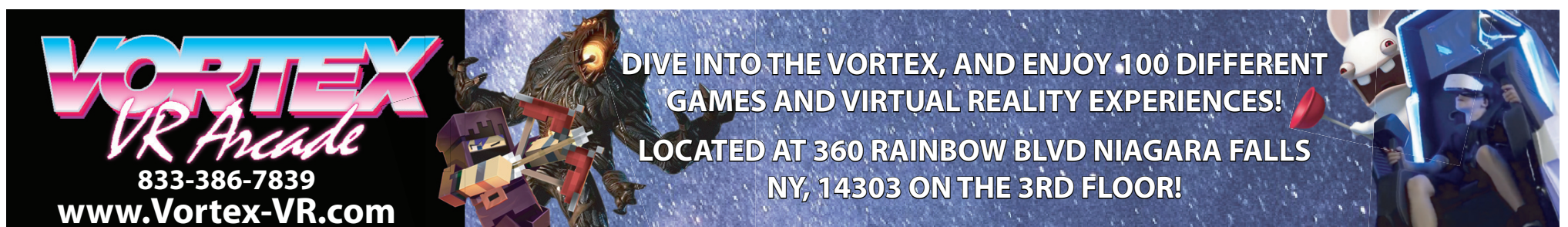
This means, on average, the taxes an average homeowner is paying is significantly higher per \$1,000 of assessed value than they should be.

Equalizing the values to the market would, therefore, drop the tax rate for entities like the Niagara Wheatfield Central School District, potentially lowering the costs to individual homeowners.

"People equate a reassessment to an increase in taxes," Baire said. "But if they actually look back over the years, they'll find their taxes actually went up and their assessment stayed the same."

Assessments have some wide-ranging effects on residents, Baire added. Like with property tax exemptions in place to provide relief to groups like senior citizens.

SEE WALLACE, continued on Page 8



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