

City fine-tunes signboard regulations

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The controversy over the use of signboards in Port Washington ended last week when the Plan Commission adopted new guidelines to regulate their use.

“I just think this is not only cleaner but better for our downtown merchants,” Ald. Dan Becker, a member of the commission, said.

There are now seven regulations, as opposed to the previous nine, many of which were never enforced by the city, said Randy Tetzlaff, director of planning and development.

The regulations were sent to downtown merchants, and there were no objections logged, he said.

Port Washington Main Street Executive Director Lauren Richmond also reviewed them, Tetzlaff added.

The new regulations call for merchants to obtain a permit for the signboards, giving the city an idea of who owns them and who to contact if there are issues, Tetzlaff said.

They require businesses to display the signs in front of their main entrance unless a special exception permit has been granted by the commission — a step required so shops on side streets can place placards on Franklin Street directing customers to them.

The signs cannot block intersections or cause a hazard to pedestrians or motorists, and they must be removed when the businesses close each day.

The signs, which can be no larger than 24-by-48 inches, must be neatly painted and maintained. They must be professionally lettered, although chalkboards are allowed to be hand lettered.

Although ubiquitous, the sandwich board-like signs prompted controversy earlier this year when some commission members complained about the appearance and locations of some placards.

Tetzlaff said the new guidelines allow the city to take steps to avoid issues in the future.

“If we still have problems, you can take another look at this and be harder,” he said. “I think it’s better to start out with less.”

The new regulations, which are part of the city’s ordinances, will be considered by the Common Council next week.