

# Signs rules back to drawing board

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

It's back to the drawing board for proposed sign regulations in Farmington Hills.

"I don't see where we've come to any kind of a consensus. There's too many questions," Farmington Hills city councilman Jonathan Grant said.

The council introduced new regulations for permanent wall and window signs in the city's business, expressway service and light industrial districts.

But that's as far as the council would go. Proposed changes to the city code for temporary window and free-standing signs tripped up the council, which decided a study session at 6 p.m. Monday, August 12 was in order.

Even though the new rules for permanent wall signs have been introduced, the city council still can change them before enactment.

"It (rules for permanent signs) really reflects what exists. We are one of the few communities that doesn't regulate the size of wall signs," said zoning supervisor Lee Blizman.

"Currently wall signs are not regulated in the business and light industrial district. They are regulated in all IRO, office and residential — because churches can be residential areas unless a

major road is between the two. Permanent signs also can only be put on two facades of a business establishment.

In the B-1 and B-3 business districts, which have smaller setbacks, wall signs may cover a maximum 10 percent of the wall. In the districts with larger setbacks, such as B-2, B-4, ES (expressway service) and light industrial, the signs can cover 15 percent of the wall.

Regulations for temporary window and free-standing signs — if approved — would be included in the city code. If included in the zoning ordinances — like the permanent sign regulations — the city would have to allow existing non-conforming signs to be grandfathered — or allowed — despite new rules.

The proposed rules for temporary window signs limit the signs to the inside of windows or doors with windows and may cover a maximum 25 percent of the window. Previous proposals put that percentage at 10 percent.

The proposed rules for free-standing temporary signs limit one sign per zoning lot with two allowed on a corner lot with 300 feet or more frontage. The sign also must have a 10-foot setback and business owners can use the temporary signs for 14 days within a six-month period. Two temporary free-standing signs would be allowed within a 12-month period.

THE TEMPORARY free-standing signs also would be limited to 12 square feet in area and four feet high, according to the proposed rules.

"This means they (business owners) don't have to go to the ZBA for this," Blizman said.

Currently if a business owner wants to put up a free-standing temporary sign they must go to the zoning board of appeals for permission.

To the dismay of some council members, banners were not mentioned in the proposed rules. Though city attorney John Donohue said he wasn't sure the rules should be that specific, others asked that banners be included in a new draft of the rules.

Linda Lynch, president-elect of the Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce offered support of the proposed rules on behalf of the chamber's membership.

"We can support 25 percent limit on temporary signs. It's also in line with the limit in Farmington, which is an important consideration," Lynch said.

Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi suggested a percentage somewhere between the originally suggested 10 percent and the proposed 25 percent. Councilman Terry Sever said he wants rules that don't make it more attractive for business owners to use temporary signs.

"IT SEEMS to me the approach we should take is to encourage permanent wall signs. That would have to become part of the 25 percent," Sever said.

City attorney Donohue, however, showed Sever that 10 percent of a wall (for permanent signs) is larger than 25 percent of a window for temporary signs.

# Farmington marks Rights bicentennial

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Farmington will be one of 200 communities nationally to host a special program in December honoring the bicentennial of the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution.

"I thought it would be fun to be one of the 200 communities," said Farmington Mayor Shirley Richardson. "It's recognition for the Bill of Rights and for our community."

Communities were invited to participate by the Michigan Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, as a way of celebrating the freedoms guaranteed to Americans by the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution. The commission suggested the communities develop special programs with a featured speaker and involve other community, school and civic groups.

The city of Farmington will host a community luncheon on Wednesday, Dec. 11, at the Farmington Elks Club, with the theme "Farmington Salutes the Bicentennial of the Bill of Rights."

At the luncheon, the Farmington Exchange Club plans to present replicas of 28 of the most famous documents in American history, which Richardson called "a lovely, lovely donation" to the city.

Speaking at the luncheon will be professor Sarah Keidan who teaches political science and business law at Oakland Community College, and who is an expert on the U.S. Constitution.

Richardson said the city selected a commemorative date close to ratification anniversary of the Bill of Rights. It was ratified and took effect Dec. 15, 1791, when approved by the Virginia legislature.

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