

Ordinance gives stores in south district more freedom to display, sell merchandise

Businesses in Grafton's south commercial district have been given more freedom to display and sell merchandise outdoors.

The Village Board last week approved an amended ordinance that allows retail stores to place up to 180 cubic feet of point-of-purchase displays and sales items within 10 feet of their front entrances.

The new regulation requires all displays to be "neatly staked and maintained at all times" and not have any signs other than those indicating sale items and price. Signs are limited to 2 square feet.

Ice storage units, vending boxes, automatic teller machines and pallets are not permitted.

By adopting the amendment — which was recommended by the Plan Commission — the board agreed to make an exception to an ordinance prohibiting outdoor storage in commercial districts, including the downtown and east-side I-43 corridor, Village Administrator Darrell Hofland said.

The only exceptions to the storage ban have been for businesses in operation before the ordinance was adopted, as well as for greenhouses, farmers markets and other temporary uses.

Hofland said the ordinance change came in response to requests from businesses in the south commercial district.

"The idea is that the south district has more neighborhood shopping than other areas," he said. "This helps ensure that everyone there is on an equal plane now."

Attracting and retaining businesses has been a major focus of the village's redevelopment plans for the district, whose major stores include the Pick 'n Save and Sendik's groceries, Shopko, Ozaukee Ace Hardware and Sears.

The ordinance change allows propane tanks to be stored outside stores, but requires the tanks to be kept in locked, metal enclosures inaccessible to the public without an employee's help. The new law also requires outdoor storage areas visible from public streets or residential areas to be screened by 6-foot masonry walls or wooden fences.

Businesses must receive Plan Commission approval for all outdoor storage areas.