

Item 7: About flyering cars.

I'm thrilled when I get a flyer from PF. Her movie choices are always compelling. She is not a commercial operator in the least. The films are shown for free. People can leave donations for food if they wish. But it's very far from a commercial operation. I can tell you that from experience. I'm a business consultant, who visits your area often. Terra Friedrichs, Acton, Business Consultant & Occasional Commuter to Cambridge

Item 8. About neon signs.

As an ex-elected official from Acton, I'm intimately aware of the challenges that towns face when trying to protect citizens from the incursion of destructive corporate interests while at the same time trying to encourage "good businesses" that help our communities thrive. There are "commerce clause" and "takings" issues that towns must consider. But when I reviewed the issue that you're discussing tonight, it seemed that the City of Cambridge is not aware of what are called "Rights-Based-Ordinances". These are ordinances that cite phrases from the Constitution, which state that the intent of the ordinance is not to restrict trade, but rather to protect citizens from harm. Here is an example of one that was enacted in New Hampshire:

"All residents of the town of Sugar Hill possess a fundamental and inalienable right to protect and preserve the scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the town, including clean air, pure water, healthy soil, and unspoiled vistas that provide the foundation for tourism and economic sustainability for local businesses. Residents and local representatives have the authority to enact and enforce legislation that guarantees an exercise of local self-government that is protective of these rights."

And then it goes on to talk about limiting fracking and other corporate activity.

This language is being held up around the country. And if other states can do it, so can we. Home Rule Petition requires the state of Massachusetts to allow cities to enact any ordinances that it "has the right to allow" (and if other states are doing it, then so can Massachusetts), as long as such ordinance is not in violation of the State Constitution.

If you want a short workshop on how this type of approach is being used to protect village districts and other commercial and residential areas using "town character" protections offered by the state, please let me know. I believe that a combination of those and RBOs may be just what you need...

Terra Friedrichs,
ex-Selectman, Acton, MA