

Is platform dining coming?

Safety issues mentioned

By Pam Fleming • STAFF WRITER • April 15, 2010

City of Northville Planning Commissioners aren't sure that platform dining is such a good thing for the downtown area.

The group discussed the concept briefly at the April 6 meeting at city hall.

Some thought Main Street was not wide enough to support the addition of platforms that would extend from the sidewalk into parking spaces for dining.

"I don't think this is the right town for it," said Jay Wendt, commission chair.

Commissioner Charles Jerzycke again expressed safety concerns that he had brought up the night before during the April 5 city council discussion on the proposed platforms.

"Cars would be only a few feet from the railings," Jerzycke said. "I don't have the expertise to say if this (the dining platform) is a safe structure."

BUILDING OFFICIAL COMMENTS

James Penn of Plymouth, a certified building official and code enforcement officer for both Plymouth and Northville, said Plymouth tried using the dining platforms and that they have been hit by cars.

Liability insurance for the structures would be the responsibility of the restaurant owner who provided

the structure, not the city of Northville.

Commissioner Marc Russell said even though there would be a ramp from the sidewalk to the platform that the platform itself may not be compliant with American with Disabilities Act regulations since there must be a certain turning radius for a wheelchair.

Commissioners also questioned the average speed of 11 mph on Main Street mentioned at the April 5 council meeting.

PROPERTY OWNER'S SUPPORT

Former business owner and downtown property owner Chuck Lapham is in favor of the platforms.

"I think the city should try them," Lapham said. "We aren't reinventing the wheel. This has already been successful in other cities. I think it will bring more people into town."

Wendt said the fact that the platforms would take up parking spaces downtown as a negative. "But, you're putting people out where they can see downtown shops," he said. "This could spur business."

His suggestion was to try having platform dining for a year and see what happens. So far, only two restaurants — Table 5 and the soon-to-come le George — on E. Main Street have expressed interest in having a dining platform.

"I do hope they (restaurant owners and city officials) talk to the merchants," Russell said. "I think that's important."