

3.9 Sign Regulations

3.9.1 Purpose: The purpose of this section is to improve pedestrian and traffic safety; to avoid the proliferation of signs and minimize their adverse effect on nearby public and private property; to enhance economic development and the esthetic environment; to encourage the effective use of signs; and, to enable fair and consistent enforcement by adopting content-neutral regulations.

3.9.2 Applicability: No sign shall be erected, placed, established, painted, created, or maintained in the town except in conformance with these sign regulations.

3.9.3 Definitions: The following words and phrases used in this section shall have the meanings set forth below:

Sign - Any device, fixture, placard, or structure that uses any color, form, graphic, illumination, symbol, or writing to advertise, attract attention to or announce the purpose of, or identify the purpose of a person or entity, or to communicate information of any kind to the public. For purposes of this bylaw, the term “sign” shall not include the following:

- (a) Official traffic control devices required, maintained, or installed by a Federal, State, or local governmental agency or an active railroad.
- (b) House/building (address) number, including a nameplate displaying the surname of the occupant of a single family residential dwelling.
- (c) Building marker indicating the name of a building and date and incidental information about its construction, which marker is cut into a masonry surface or made of bronze or other permanent material.
- (d) National flags, state or municipal flags, or the official flag of any institution.
- (e) War Veteran markers installed within the public right-of-way at locations designated by the Board of Selectmen as “Memorial Square” intersections.
- (f) Holiday lights and decorations.
- (g) Devices on residential properties that otherwise might be considered signs, but are only intended for the personal enjoyment of the residents thereof, and not

intended to attract the attention of the public and not generally visible from a public way.

Banner - Any sign of lightweight fabric or similar material that is affixed to a pole or a building at one or more edges or corners. National, state or municipal flags shall not be considered banners.

Billboard – A large, standardized third-party freestanding outdoor advertising structure, characterized by providing off-premise advertising space intended for viewing from extended distances, generally more than 50 feet.

Community Bulletin Board - A single- or double-faced freestanding sign frame structure with a glass or plastic covered message surface designed for the short-term posting of multiple, individual announcements. A community bulletin board shall not exceed 6 feet in height, and the message surface shall not exceed 24 square feet in area. Postings shall be limited to announcements of local cultural, social, educational or special events or public services.

Freestanding sign - Any sign supported by structures or supports that are placed on, or anchored in, the ground and that are independent from any building or other structure.

Inflatable Sign – Any sign capable of being expanded by air or other gas.

Official traffic control devices - devices required, maintained, or installed by a Federal, State, or local governmental agency or an active railroad for the purpose of guiding, directing, warning, or regulating traffic.

Pennant - Any lightweight plastic, fabric, or other material, suspended from a rope, wire, or string, usually in series, designed to move in the wind.

Portable sign - Any sign not permanently attached to the ground or other permanent structure, or a sign designed to be transported, including, but not limited to, signs designed to be transported by means of wheels; signs converted to A or T frames; menu and sandwich board signs.

Roof sign - Any sign erected and constructed wholly on and over the roof of a building, supported by the roof structure, and extending vertically above the highest portion of the roof.

Temporary sign - Any sign of lightweight material that is used only for a limited period and not for permanent display.

Wall sign - Any sign attached parallel to, but within six inches of, a wall, painted on the wall surface of, or erected and confined within the limits of an outside wall of any building or structure, which is supported by such wall or building, and which displays only one sign surface.

Window sign - Any sign that is placed on the exterior of a window, or upon the inside of the window glass and is visible from the exterior of the window, including signs placed inside a building that are visible beyond five feet from the exterior of the window.

3.9.4 Signs Prohibited: Any sign not permitted in these sign regulations shall be prohibited. Moreover, the following signs shall be specifically prohibited:

3.9.4.1 Any sign within the right-of-way of a public or private street or way, except for those specifically exempted by Section 3.9.5.1 herein.

3.9.4.2 Any sign that may be confused with an official traffic control device.

3.9.4.3 Pennants, banners, and strings of lights.

3.9.4.4 Inflatable signs.

3.9.4.5 Flashing signs, any part of which moves or flashes, or signs of the traveling light or animated type, and all beacons and flashing devices whether a part of, attached to, or apart from a sign.

3.9.4.6 Changeable copy electronic message panels and/or signs displaying images or messages that change more than eight times a day and for less than one hour duration per each image or message displayed.

3.9.4.7 Roof signs.

3.9.4.8 Temporary and portable signs except as permitted in Section 3.9.12 herein.

3.9.4.9 Signs placed so as to obscure vision as per Section 2.4.6 herein.

3.9.5 Exemptions: The following shall be exempt from regulation under this by-law:

3.9.5.1 Exemptions for sign placement within the right-of-way of a public or private street shall be limited to the following:

3.9.5.1.1 Changeable copy electronic message panels utilized by the Police Department for traffic control and/or safety purposes.

3.9.5.1.2 Official legal notices, or public warning/informational bulletins posted by the Town.

3.9.5.1.3 Public Utility warning/informational signs regarding poles, lines, pipes, or similar facilities.

3.9.5.1.4 Within the CA Central Commercial district, temporary banner suspended across Main Street if authorized by the Board of Selectmen.

3.9.5.1.5 Emergency warning signs installed by a governmental agency, a public utility company, or a contractor doing authorized or permitted work within the public right-of-way.

3.9.5.1.6 Any sign installed or placed within the public right-of-way or on public property not in conformance with the requirements of these sign regulations, may be removed by the Town.

3.9.5.2 Exemptions for sign placement on lots shall be limited to the following:

3.9.5.2.1 Any public notice or warning required by a valid and applicable federal, state, or local law, regulation, or by-law.

3.9.5.2.2 Any sign inside a building, including signs attached to the inside of a window or door, not visible beyond five feet from the exterior of the window.

3.9.5.2.3 Any sign inside an athletic facility, including inward facing signs attached to the inside of a wall or fence.

3.9.5.2.4 Traffic directional signs, utilized solely as traffic control devices on private property, the face of which meet Department of Transportation

standards and which have been shown on a site plan approved by the Planning Board, or on a common signage plan as per Section 3.9.10 herein.

3.9.5.2.5 Emergency warning signs installed by a governmental agency, a public utility company, or a contractor doing authorized or permitted work within the right-of-way of an adjacent street.

3.9.6 Computations: The following shall control the computation of sign area and sign height:

3.9.6.1 Sign Area - shall be computed by means of the smallest square, circle, rectangle, triangle, or combination thereof that will encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representation, emblem, or other display, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop or structure against which it is placed, but not including any supporting framework, bracing, or decorative fence or wall when such fence or wall otherwise meets zoning by-law requirements and is clearly incidental to the display itself.

3.9.6.2 Area of Multi-faced Signs - shall be computed by adding together the area of all sign faces visible from any one point. When two sign faces of identical dimensions are placed back to back, so that both faces cannot be viewed at the same time, and when such sign faces are part of the same sign structure and are not more than 42 inches apart, the sign area shall be computed by the measurement of only one of the faces.

3.9.6.3 Sign Height - The distance from the base of the sign at normal grade to the top of the highest attached component of the sign. Normal grade shall be construed to be the lower of (1) existing grade prior to construction or (2) the newly established grade after construction, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding, or excavating done solely for the purpose of locating the sign.

3.9.7 Signs Permitted: Within the districts noted below, the following signs are permitted:

3.9.7.1 RA, RB, RC and RD Districts - One wall sign or one free-standing sign per lot, and one home occupation sign in accordance with Section 3.3.3 if applicable.

3.9.7.2 RA, RB, RC and RD Districts – wall signs or free-standing signs shall

not exceed six square feet in area.

3.9.7.3 RA, RB, RC and RD Districts - free-standing signs shall not exceed six feet in height.

3.9.7.4 OR District - One wall sign on each side of a building per use per lot provided that the aggregate of all wall signs does not exceed 5% of the wall area upon which they are displayed.

3.9.7.5 BP District - One wall sign on each side of a building per use per lot provided that the aggregate of all wall signs does not exceed 10% of the wall area upon which they are displayed.

3.9.7.6 OR and BP Districts - one free-standing sign per street frontage provided that the aggregate of all free-standing signs does not exceed 80 square feet in area.

3.9.7.7 OR District - free-standing signs shall not exceed 20 feet in height.

3.9.7.8 BP Districts - free-standing signs shall not exceed 30 feet in height.

3.9.7.9 CA, CB, CC, IA, IB and IC Districts - One wall sign on each side of a building per use per lot provided that the aggregate of all wall signs does not exceed 20% of the wall area upon which they are displayed.

3.9.7.10 CA, CB, CC, IA, IB and IC Districts - One free-standing sign per street frontage provided that that the aggregate of all free-standing signs does not exceed one square feet per foot of lot frontage on the street towards which they are oriented.

3.9.7.11 CA, CB, CC, IA, IB and IC Districts - Free-standing signs shall not exceed 30' in height.

3.9.7.12 CA, CB, CC, IA, IB and IC Districts - The total area of all signs, either wall mounted or free-standing, shall aggregate not more than four square feet per foot of lot frontage on the street towards which they are oriented.

3.9.7.13 Within all zoning districts - Community Bulletin Boards maintained by the Town on Town owned or operated property to the extent authorized and approved by such board or agency with jurisdiction over such property. Such

bulletin boards shall not be included in the aggregate calculation required by Section 3.9.7.10 herein.

3.9.8 Design, Construction, and Maintenance: Except for banners, flags, temporary signs, and window signs, all signs shall be constructed of permanent materials and shall be permanently attached to the ground, a building, or another structure by direct attachment to a rigid wall, frame, or structure, and shall be maintained in good structural condition at all times. Banners affixed directly to the exterior surface of any building or wall shall be prohibited.

3.9.9 Permits Required: A building permit is required for the placement, construction, erection, or modification of any sign except within the RA, RB, RC, and RD zoning districts. The permit application shall be accompanied by detailed drawings to show the dimensions, design, structure, and location of each sign, to the extent that such details are not contained on a Common Signage Plan then in effect for the premises. A single application and permit may include multiple signs on the same premises.

3.9.10 Site Plan Required: Site plan approval by the Planning Board shall be required for all free-standing signs prior to the issuance of a building permit, except for temporary signs as provided for in Section 3.9.12 herein.

3.9.11 Common Signage Plan: On lots containing existing multiple uses and/or buildings where a change to the signage is proposed, a common signage plan shall be submitted to the Building Commissioner to provide coordination among the various interests in providing signage on such lots. Such common signage plans may be approved by the Building Commissioner prior to the issuance of applicable permits.

3.9.11.1 The Common Signage Plan shall contain the following elements:

3.9.11.1.1 An accurate site plan of the premises, at such scale as the Building Commissioner may reasonably require.

3.9.11.1.2 Location of buildings, parking lots, driveways, and landscaped areas on such premises.

3.9.11.1.3 Computation of the maximum total sign area, the maximum area for individual signs, the height of signs and the number of freestanding signs allowed on the premises included in the site plan.

3.9.11.1.4 An accurate indication on the site plan of the proposed location of each present and future sign of any type, whether requiring a permit or not.

3.9.11.2 Provisions: The Common Signage Plan shall specify standards for consistency among all signs on the premises affected by the Plan with regard to Type, Lighting, Location, and Sign proportions.

3.9.11.3 Existing Nonconforming Signs: For Common Signage Plans filed for a property on which existing nonconforming signs are located, all such signs and the extent of their nonconformity shall be noted on the plan.

3.9.11.4 Binding Effect: After approval of a Common Signage Plan, no sign shall be erected, placed, painted, or maintained, except in conformance with such plan. In case of any conflict between the provisions of such a plan and any other provision of this by-law, the by-law shall control.

3.9.11.5 Common Signage Plan - New Construction: A Common Signage Plan shall be included with the submittal of required Site Plans to the Planning Board for all new development proposals and for all re-development proposals.

3.9.12 Temporary Signs: On lots within the RA, RB, RC, RD and OR zoning districts, and within non-residential zoning districts where the principal use on a premises is residential, temporary freestanding signs relating to one-time events shall be allowed subject to the following requirements:

3.9.12.1 No more than 1 such sign shall be permitted on the same lot at any one time, except that during the months of March, April, September, October and November no more than 4 such signs shall be permitted on the same lot at any one time.

3.9.12.2 Such signs shall not exceed 6 square feet in area per sign.

3.9.12.3 Such signs shall not exceed 3 feet in height.

3.9.12.4 Such signs shall not be displayed more than 45 days before the event being announced, and shall be removed within 72 hours following said event.

3.9.12.5 Such signs shall not be illuminated in any way.

On lots within the BP, CA, CB, CC, IA, IB, and IC zoning districts, temporary banner signs announcing one-time special community events or similar public service announcements shall be allowed subject to the following requirements:

3.9.12.6 No more than 1 such banner shall be permitted on the same lot at any one time.

3.9.12.7 Such banner shall not exceed 12 square feet in area.

3.9.12.8 Such banner shall not be displayed more than 30 days before the event being announced, and shall be removed within 72 hours following said event.

3.9.12.9 Such banner shall not be illuminated in any way.

3.9.13 Temporary Sign/Substitution: Where a permit has been issued as per Section 3.9.9 herein, a temporary sign may be utilized in place of the permanent sign so permitted, but only for a period not to exceed 30 consecutive days prior to such time as the permanent sign is installed.