

SECTION 16 SIGNS

16.1 Purpose

It is the purpose of this Section to protect the public health, safety and general welfare by regulating signs that obstruct traffic visibility, that pose a danger through disrepair and threat of collapse, and that disrupt the aesthetic environment of the Town of Warren.

16.2 Definitions

Abandoned Sign: A sign which has not identified or advertised a current business, service, owner, product, or activity for a period of ~~365 days~~ six months or more.

Billboard: An outdoor sign advertising services or products, activities, persons, or events which are not made, produced, assembled, stored, distributed, leased, sold, or conducted upon the premises upon which the billboard is located.

Nonconforming Sign: A sign that was legally erected and maintained on the effective date of this Bylaw, or amendment thereto, that does not currently comply with sign regulations of the district in which it is located.

Roof Sign: A building-mounted sign erected upon, against, or over the roof of a building.

Sign: Any device, symbol, drawing, picture, design or object which is used for visual communication and intended to attract attention or convey a message. An on-site sign is one that is related to the premises on which it is located. Historical date plaques and markers, and flags and insignias of governmental jurisdictions shall not be considered signs.

Sign Area: The area of a sign shall be considered to include all lettering, wording and accompanying designs and symbols, together with the background on which they are displayed, any frame around the sign and any cutouts or extensions, but shall not include any supporting structure or bracing. The area of one side of a double-faced sign shall be used to compute the area.

Standing Sign or Ground Sign: a sign supported by permanent uprights or braces in the ground.

Temporary Sign: Any sign that is not permanently installed. Examples include signs endorsing candidates or issues for public elections, signs pertaining to construction on the premises or the sale/lease of the premises, signs advertising yard sales, etc.

Wall Sign: Any sign attached to or erected against the wall of a structure with the display surface of the sign in a plane parallel to the plane of the wall, which does not project more than twelve (12) inches from the face of the structure.

16.3 Sign Administration

16.3.1 **Sign Permit:** Unless exempt under Section 16.6, all signs require a sign permit from the Building Commissioner. An application for a sign permit shall include a plan or drawing showing the proposed construction, method of installation or support, colors, dimensions, location of the sign on the site, and method of illumination.

16.3.2 **Maintenance of Signs:** All signs shall be maintained in sound structural condition and the face shall be maintained to be readable.

16.3.2 **Enforcement:** An unsafe sign shall be abated by the owner within thirty (30) days of receiving notice from the Building Commissioner. The Building Commissioner may impose a fine for sign violations in accordance with Section 6.3, Penalty, of this Zoning Bylaw and Article I, Section 4.B, Noncriminal Disposition, of the Warren General Bylaws.

16.3.4 **Nonconforming Signs:** A sign that was legally erected before May 10, 2016 which does not conform to the provisions of this Bylaw may continue if it is maintained in good condition. To be considered a nonconforming sign, the sign owner must photograph and register the sign with the Town Clerk within one year of adoption of this Section 16. A nonconforming sign may be reworded to reflect a change in business name and may have its surface and support renewed or

replaced with new material, subject to the issuance of a building permit. It may not be replaced by another non-conforming sign. It may not be re-established after damage or destruction if the Building Commissioner determines that the reconstruction exceeds fifty percent (50%) of the original sign.

16.3.5 Abandoned Signs:

1. Any sign, which advertises or identifies products, businesses, services or activities which are no longer sold, located or carried on or at the premises shall be removed within 365 days of the cessation of the service or sales of such product. Removal of an abandoned sign shall include the removal of the entire sign including the sign face, supporting structure, and structural trim. After such time the sign shall be considered abandoned and any replacement shall be required to conform to the provisions of this Bylaw.
2. Where the owner of the property on which an abandoned sign is located fails to remove such sign, the Town may remove the sign. Any expense directly incurred in the removal of the sign shall be charged to the owner of the property. Where the owner fails to pay, the Town may file a lien upon the property for the purpose of recovering all reasonable costs associated with the removal of the sign.

16.3.6 Sign Waivers by Special Permit: The ~~Zoning Board of Appeals-Planning Board~~ may grant a special permit to allow a greater number of signs than otherwise permitted and/or signs with dimensions in excess of those otherwise permitted, but may not authorize signs prohibited in Section 16.4.

1. The Board may approve the special permit if it finds that such signs will conform to the purpose and intent of this Section 16; the sign(s) are appropriate for the location, the size of the property/ premises, the building(s) thereon, and the neighborhood setting; and the signs will be informative, legible and designed to improve the quality of the streetscape. In no event shall the issuance of a special permit be construed as precedent with respect to the issuance of similar special permits in the future, as each application and site is unique.

16.4 Prohibited Signs

1. Abandoned signs
2. Roof Signs
3. Signs placed on unregistered, inoperable vehicles or trailers which are parked for the purpose of displaying a sign. This prohibition does not apply to registered vehicles used in the regular course of business with a primary purpose other than advertising.
4. Signs attached to trees, utility poles, public benches, streetlights, or placed on any public property or public right-of-way.
5. Billboards
6. Signs that are visible from public and private ways shall not flash, rotate, be animated, be motorized or move, or be designed to move by any means, in whole or in part, except for portions indicating time or temperature only.

~~7. Signs that contain or consist of pennants, ribbons, streamers, spinners or other moving devices, strings of lights unless associated with a specific holiday, or are inflatable.~~

~~8.7.~~ Signs which are portable or otherwise capable of being readily moved from one location to another and having no permanent or in-ground supporting structures or braces.

16.5 Regulations That Apply to All Signs:

1. Signs shall only be illuminated by steady white light directed solely at the sign and shielded so as prevent direct glare from the light source onto any public street or onto any adjacent property. No messages or graphics on permanent signs shall be formed by lights of any kind, with the exception of time and temperature. ~~Backlit or internally illuminated signs are prohibited.~~

2. Signs shall not be sited in any location which will obstruct traffic visibility or reduce visibility at entrances, exits or intersections.

16.6 Signs Permitted in All Districts Without a Permit

1. A sign for the name of a property owner or customary home occupation shall not exceed six (6) square feet in area.
2. Building owners shall mark their property with street numbers in conformance with Article IX, Section 14 of the Warren General Bylaws.

~~3. Holiday decorations when displayed within forty five (45) days prior to and seven (7) days after the holiday for which they are specifically identified and which do not advertise or promote the interests of any person, promise or activity.~~

~~4.3.~~ An unlimited number of temporary signs may be displayed on a lot at any time. The aggregate area of such signs shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet. A temporary sign may not be displayed more than sixty (60) days before an event or activity and shall be removed within seven (7) days of the event or completion of the activity being advertised.

~~5.4.~~ Agricultural and recreational uses may have up to three (3) off-site directional signs to provide directions to the premises. Each sign may not exceed six (6) square feet in area.

16.7 On-Site Signs

16.7.1 The following regulations shall apply to properties in business or industrial use (collectively businesses) within Village and Commercial Districts and Mill and Major Development Overlay Districts.

1. A business may have one wall sign on each wall plus an additional sign at each building entrance when needed to indicate a separate department or operation or to provide a directory of occupants. The total aggregate area of such signs on any building wall shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the area of the wall, and any individual sign shall not exceed thirty-two (32) square feet. Wall signs shall not project above the roof or parapet line nor extend beyond any wall of the building.
2. A lot in business use may have one standing or ground sign located on the lot not exceeding forty (40) square feet in area and (15) feet in height. Such signs shall be set back fifteen (15) feet from the front lot line and (10) feet from any other lot line, and shall not obstruct visibility at driveway locations.
3. A business may have window signs, visible from the window's exterior side, either hung or otherwise attached directly to the inside of a window, or painted or etched on either side of the window glass, provided that the aggregate display area covers no more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the window glass.
4. In addition to the above, a business may have one projecting sign perpendicular to the wall of the building which shall not project horizontally more than five (5) feet from the building. Such sign shall not exceed sixteen (16) square feet in sign area and shall not project above any part of the roof or parapet line. See also Section 16.8 below.
5. Signs are permitted to provide directions to a business or other activity located within the development and shall not exceed two (2) square feet each in area.
6. In addition to the above signs, churches and civic institutions shall be allowed two (2) bulletin or announcement boards, one of which may not exceed twenty (20) square feet in area, and one of which may not exceed ten (10) square feet in area.

16.7.2 Businesses in Rural and Residential districts may have signs as allowed in Section 16.7.1 except that the maximum sign area shall not exceed one-half (1/2) of that which is allowed above.

16.8 Signs in or Over Public Ways: The Board of Selectmen may grant permits as provided in Article IX, Section 7 of the General Bylaws for signs projecting into or placed on or over public ways.