

PROPOSED CHANGES TO SIGN BYLAW

The Planning Board reviews sign applications and issues permits for all signs posted in Dover other than traffic signs and signs on Town-owned property and in street rights-of-way. The number and nature of signs are of particular importance in preserving the Town's rural character.

The parts of the Town Code relating to signs are Section 185-35 of the zoning bylaws and Chapter 246 of the zoning regulations. The sign bylaw was last amended at the 2007 Annual Town Meeting.

The Planning Board is proposing changes to the sign bylaw at this year's Annual Town Meeting in response to a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision, as well as based on our experience applying the current sign bylaw over the last ten years.

The Supreme Court's decision in *Reed v. Gilbert, Arizona* (2015) affirmed that content-based restrictions on signs (absent a compelling government interest) violate free speech rights under the First Amendment to the Constitution. Sign requirements must be content-neutral. Dover's current sign bylaw is not content-neutral; it specifies different requirements for different types of signs, such as for real estate, contractors and home occupations.

- The proposed bylaw establishes a uniform maximum size for signs in residential districts of 9 square feet rather than different sizes for different types of signs.

Since Dover's sign bylaw has to be amended to comply with the *Reed* decision, the proposed bylaw also includes the following changes to remedy other shortcomings in the current bylaw:

- Specifies that commercial signs must be of professional quality
- Prohibits signs on or above roofs
- Prohibits dayglow or luminescent colors
- Limits signs inside windows (20%) and glass doors (10% of glass)
- Requires new businesses to comply with new requirements
- Clarifies that only 1 permanent sign is allowed on premises in residential districts

A copy of sign bylaw showing all proposed changes in redline is posted on the Town website.

The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed bylaw changes on February 27, 2017 at 7:30PM at the Town House. The Board encourages your attendance at this hearing and your comments on the proposed changes.