



# **Article 16: Sign Bylaw Amendments**

Planning Board

Annual Town Meeting

May 1, 2017

# What is the Sign Bylaw?

## **Dover's current sign bylaw:**

- Section 185-35 of the zoning bylaws
- Intended to create functional, attractive signs that enhance visual environment and discourage clutter
- Last amended by Town Meeting 10 years ago (2007)

**The number and nature of signs are key to preserving Dover's rural character**

# Why Amend the Sign Bylaw?

## **SCOTUS decision in *Reed v. Gilbert, AZ***

- Unanimous ruling that an Arizona town's sign bylaw violated the First Amendment by regulating signs based on their content
- Result: sign bylaws must be content-neutral
- Dover's current sign bylaw is not content-neutral

## **Experience applying the current bylaw**

- Current bylaw and regulations don't fully reflect Planning Board custom and practice

# What are the Proposed Changes?

## 1. Remove content-based distinctions:

Current Bylaw	Proposed Bylaw
<b>Residential Districts:</b>	
4 sf max: contractor signs 12 sf max: real estate signs	Temporary signs: 9 sf max
4 sf max: property names home occupations	Permanent signs: 4 sf max
<b>Commercial Districts:</b>	
All signs 15 sf max	Same; no change

# What are the Proposed Changes?

## 2. Better reflect current customs and practices:

- Commercial signs must be of professional quality
- No new signs on or above roofs
- No dayglow or luminescent colors
- Window / glass door signs limited to 20% / 10%
- Free-standing (e.g., ground-mounted) commercial signs limited to 5 feet in height
- Encourages pre-existing, non-confirming signs to be brought into compliance if/when updated

# Why Vote for This Article?

**A “yes” vote on this article will:**

- Make Dover’s sign bylaw consistent with the *Reed* decision, and thus more reliably enforceable
- Update the bylaw to reflect current norms
- Help manage signs as Dover continues to grow

**Thanks!**



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