



## Inspections and Planning Department

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## INFORMATION REGARDING POLITICAL SIGNS

### **Section I: Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance regarding the posting, maintaining, and removal of signs associated with public elections inside the corporate limits of the City of Clinton. It is the goal of the City of Clinton to work with candidate for public office and any organizations affiliated with candidate for public office to achieve voluntary compliance with local and state regulations regarding how, when, and where signs are posted that advertise any particular candidate. The Code Enforcement Section of the City of Clinton's Planning Department has primary responsibility for enforcing sign regulations and ordinances, and seeks to enforce those regulations and ordinances in a fair and consistent manner.

### **Section II: Definitions of Signs**

The City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance provides the following definitions for signs:

A **sign** is any object, device, display, or structure, or part thereof situated outdoors, which is used to advertise, identify, display, direct, or attract attention to any object, person, institution, organizations, business, product, service, event, or location by any means including words, letters, figures, designs, symbols, fixtures, colors, illumination, or projected images (excluding national or state flags, window displays, athletic scoreboards, or the official announcements or signs of government). **(City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance: Section 2)**

A **political sign** is defined as "a temporary sign announcing or supporting political candidates or issues in connection with any national, state, or local election." **(City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance: Section 2)**

### **Section III: General Regulations Regarding Posting of Political Signs**

There are city ordinances in place regarding the display, location, and posting of political signs. These regulations are listed below with interpretations as provided by the Zoning Administrator.

#### **Posting Signs on City Property is Prohibited:**

**Regulation:** The placement of private advertisements, personal, commercial, and/or political, on city property for the purpose of promoting a product, organization and/or individual is strictly prohibited. (Code of the City of Clinton: Section 50-1: Posting Private Advertisements. Based on Ordinance passed on 4-11-88).

**Interpretation:** The section of the City Code prohibits placing political signs on property owned by the city. This includes public buildings, public parks, and any real estate owned by the City of Clinton.

**Signs Imitating Warning Signals are Prohibited:**

Regulation: No sign or structure shall display flashing or intermittent lights of any type, nor shall any colored lights be utilized for sign purposes that resemble lights utilized on emergency vehicles, including police, fire, ems, towing, and rescue vehicles; nor shall any sign use the words "Stop", "Danger" or any other that might confuse an automobile or other vehicles driver. (City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance Section 3.17.5.A)

Interpretation: According to the zoning ordinance, no political signs may use flashing lights or mimic any traffic control device.

**Signs Within the Street or Highway Rights of Way Are Allowed:**

Regulation: Signs within street or highway rights of way are prohibited except for traffic signs and signals, information signs erected by an authorized government agency, or political signs. (City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance Section 3.17.5.B)

Interpretation: Political signs may be placed in street or highway rights of way, however, they may not endanger the safety of the public. All political signs in nonresidential areas should be placed no less than three feet from the edge of the road in order to protect city right of way maintenance crews and equipment from damaging signs or from being damaged by signs. Signs should not be placed between the edge of the sidewalk and the curb or edge of the road.

**Signs Cannot be Attached to Fence Posts, Trees, and Utility Poles:**

Regulation: Signs painted or attached to trees, fence posts, and telephone poles and other utility poles or signs painted on or attached to rocks or other natural features are prohibited. (City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance Section 3.17.5.C)

Interpretation: Political signs or flyers may not be attached to any trees, utility poles, telephone poles, or fences.

**Time Limits on Political Signs:**

Regulation: Political signs may not be placed more than forty-five (45) days before an election and must be removed (10) days after an election. (City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance Section 3.17.5.C)

Interpretation: Political signs cannot be placed more than forty-five (45) days before an election and must be removed ten (10) days after an election. Signs placed more than forty-five (45) days before the election or left out more than ten (10) days after the election may be removed by city officials. A landowner who leaves a political sign up on his or her property beyond ten (10) days will be notified to remove the sign within five (5) days. Landowners who fail to comply with the five (5) day removal order may be fined in accordance with the City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance Section 3.17.6.F.2.

**Special Regulations Regarding Site Triangles at Intersections**

Regulation: For protection against traffic hazards, no impediment to visibility shall be placed, allowed to grow, erected or maintained with visibility triangles described as follows: Size of Site Triangle: A triangular shaped portion of land 25 feet wide and 25 feet deep at the intersection. No structure, sign, or landscaping material shall exceed 2.5 feet in height within the sight triangle. (City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance Section 3.22.1-3).

Interpretation: Signs that are taller than 2.5 feet as measured from the highest point on the sign to the ground may not be placed in the sight triangle area.

### **Section V: Violations**

Signs placed in violation of city ordinances may be removed by city officials. If signs are removed, they will be kept by the city for a period of ten (10) days. If the signs are not claimed within ten (10) days they may be destroyed. A sign left in place for more than five (5) days after a notice to remove has been either received or refused are in violation of the zoning ordinance. The maximum fine for such a violation is \$100 per day.

### **Section VI: Authority and Appeals**

The Zoning Administrator has the authority to administer and enforce the City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance. The above listed interpretations represent the written decision of the zoning administrator in regards to the interpretation of the regulations listed above. The decision of the Zoning Administrator may be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals in accordance with Section 5 of the City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance.

## **Frequently Asked Questions – Political Signs**

### **What are the rules for placing the signs next to streets and sidewalks?**

Political signs are allowable in street right of ways, or along streets, provided they meet the following criteria:

- 1.) In non-residential areas the signs should be placed at least three (3) feet from the edge of the road.
- 2.) In areas where a sidewalk is present, the sign should not be placed between the sidewalk and the edge of the road.
- 3.) In residential areas without a sidewalk the signs may be placed next to the road.

*This standard is in place to protect city employees who are responsible for maintaining right of way along roadways and to prevent damage to your signs by city crews engaged in right of way maintenance. Signs placed within three (3) feet of the road may be removed by city personnel.*

### **I'd like to staple my signs to light poles. Is that OK?**

No, the City of Clinton Zoning Ordinance prevents attaching any signs of any type to any light pole, utility pole, telephone pole, tree, or fence post. Any signs found attached to light poles, utility poles, telephone poles, trees, or fence posts will be removed.

### **Are flashing lights acceptable?**

Flashing lights are prohibited on all signs inside the city limits, including political signs.

### **When can I put my signs out?**

Signs can be placed no more than forty-five (45) days before the election.

### **Do I have to remove my signs after the election?**

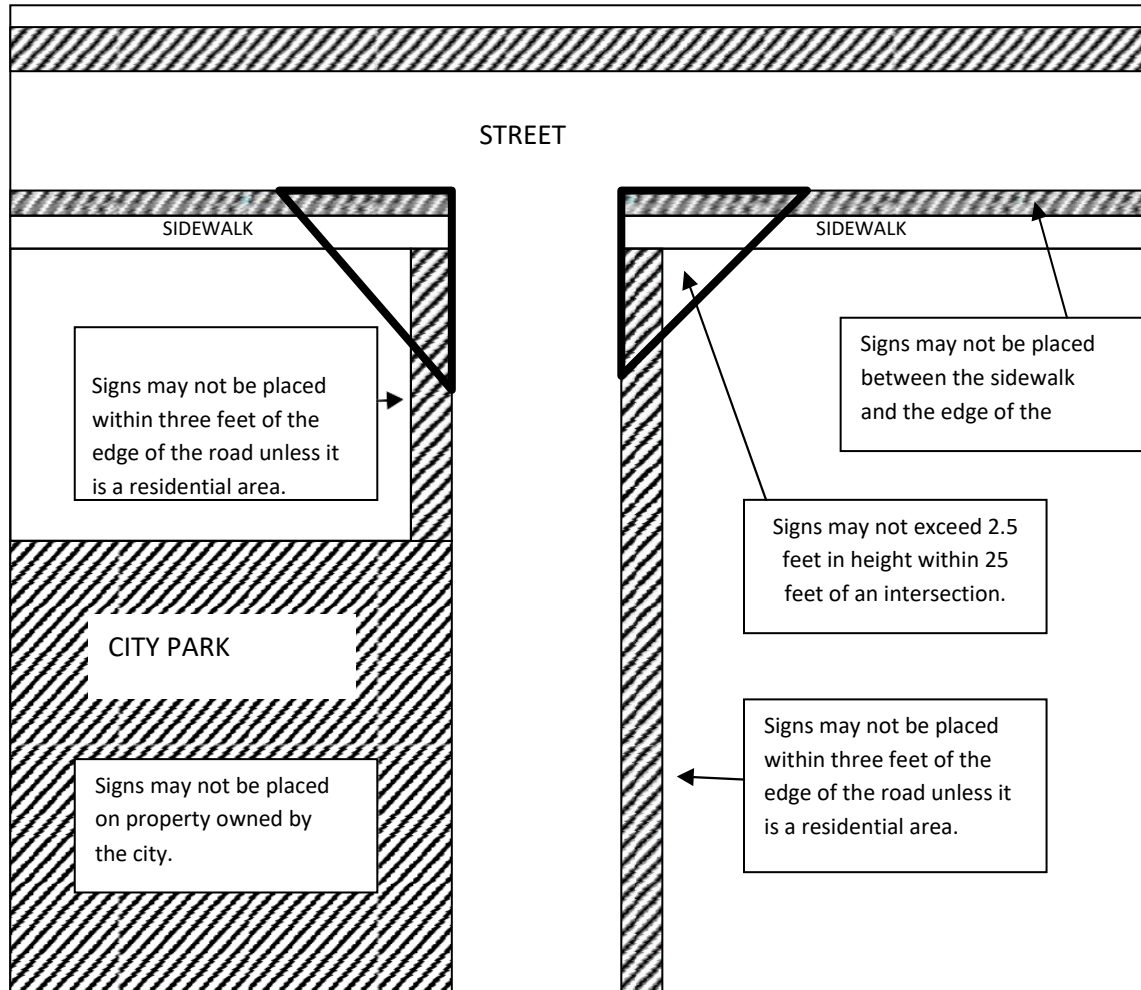
Yes, signs must be removed within ten (10) days of the election. Property owners who allow signs to be left on their property more than ten (10) days after the election will receive a notice to remove the sign within five (5) days of the date of the notice. Failure to remove the sign after receiving a notice may result in a maximum fine of \$100 per day.

**City personnel removed my signs because they were in violation of a city ordinance. Where can I pick**

them up?

If city personnel remove a political sign because it was in violation of an ordinance, then it will be kept for ten (10) days. After ten (10) days, if no arrangements have been made to pick up the signs, the signs will be destroyed. If you believe that city personnel may have picked up your signs, you may contact the Code Enforcement Office located in the M. S. Bailey Municipal Center at 211 North Broad Street by calling (864) 833-7517.

**Figure 1: Allowable Sign Locations**



**For questions or more information contact one of our team members in the Inspections and Planning or Finance Divisions:**

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