

## ARTICLE

To see if the Town will vote to amend Section 2.0 Definitions, 2.2.29 Sign, Section 4.3.3 Site Plan Review and Section 6.2, Signs, of the Town of Reading Zoning By-Laws by deleting in its entirety 2.2.29., 4.3.3.5.1.a., 4.3.3.6.f. and Section 6.2, and inserting in its place the following new sections:

### **New Definition in Section 2.2.29 to read,**

**2.2.29. Sign:** Any word or combination of number, emblem, picture, design, trademark or other device including the support structure of freestanding signs.

Signage is the collection of signs. Signage does not include temporary holiday decorations, historical date markers or plaques, or artwork that contains no commercial messages.

**The words in italics in the following two paragraphs show language to be added in the existing by-law.**

#### **4.3.3.5.1.a.**

Site Layout, which shall contain the boundaries of the lot(s) in the proposed development, proposed structures, drives, parking, fences, walls, walks, outdoor lighting, *signage*, loading facilities, and areas for snow storage after plowing. The first sheet in this plan shall be a locus plan, at a scale acceptable to CPDC, showing the entire project and its relation to the existing areas, buildings and roads for a distance of one thousand (1,000) feet from the project boundaries or such other distance as may be approved or required by the staff.

#### **4.3.3.6.f.**

Minimize unreasonable departure from the character, materials, *signage* and scale of buildings in the vicinity, as viewed from public ways and places;

**To replace Section 6.2 entirely with the following:**

### **6.2. SIGNS**

6.2.1 Signs perform important functions in the community such as communicating messages and providing information about goods and services available. Because signs potentially have detrimental impact on the visual and perceptual environment, signs must be regulated. It is the intent of Section 6.2 of the zoning by-law to protect property values, create an attractive business climate, enhance and protect the physical appearance of the community and to encourage the most appropriate use

of the land. This section will also assist those installing signs within the Town of Reading by setting forth the process governing the application, installation, and maintenance of such signs.

6.2.1.2. Applicability: A sign may be erected, placed, established, painted, created or maintained only in conformity with the provisions of this Section.

6.2.1.3 Zoning Districts: The zoning districts are as shown on the official zoning map which is on file with the Engineering Department and the Town Clerk's office and can also be found on the Town website. Reading has also adopted a Downtown Smart Growth District (DSGD) and a Gateway Smart Growth District (GSGD). Please refer to Section 4.12 for DSGD regulations and Section 4.11 for GSGD regulations.

6.2.2. Definitions: For the purposes of Section 6.2., the following terms shall have the meanings hereby assigned to them:

- a. Awning Sign: A sign painted on or attached to the cloth, canvas or metal cover of a movable or stationary frame of the fixed, hinged, rolled or folding type of awning.
- b. Banner or Pennant: Any sign of lightweight fabric or similar material that is mounted or affixed at one or more edges.
- c. Beacon: A stationary or revolving light, not primarily illuminating a sign, which flashes or projects illumination, single color or multi-colored, in any manner which is intended to attract or divert attention, except any such fixture which is required by the Federal Aviation Administration or a similar agency and is installed and operated under the safety regulations of such agency.
- d. Bulletin Board: Any sign erected by a charitable, educational, or religious institution or a public body on its property for purposes of announcing events which are held on the premises, and contains no commercial information.
- e. Commercial Message: Any sign wording, logo, or other representation that directly or indirectly names, advertises, or calls attention to a business, product, service, sale, or sales event or other commercial activity.
- f. Façade: The area of the face of a building, typically the principal or front wall of a building.
- g. Free-Standing Sign: Any and every sign erected on or permanently affixed to the land, including any and every sign that is not attached to a building.

- h. Halo Lighting: Light showing from the back of or from within a letter or graphic shape out towards the surface that the letter or graphic is mounted on without having any light visible through the face of the letter or graphic.
- i. Informational & Directional Signage: A sign that has a purpose secondary to the use of the lot on which it is located, such as “no parking, private parking, enter, exit, one-way, street address, or Drive-thru teller”.
- j. Identification Sign:  
Joint Identification Sign: A sign which serves as common or collective identification for a group of persons or businesses operating on the same lot and which contains the names and logos of establishments but no advertising or promotional information.  
  
Area Identification Sign: A sign, located at the site entrance(s), identifying a common area containing a group of structures, or a single structure containing several uses.
- k. Marquee Sign: Any sign attached to or made part of a marquee, that is, any permanent canopy or structure projecting beyond and extending along a building wall.
- l. Monument Sign: A free-standing sign with a low height configuration permanently affixed to the ground at its base and not mounted on a pole.
- m. Off-Premises Sign: Any sign which directs attention to a business, commodity, service, entertainment, attraction, or other commercial activity which is sold, offered, or existing elsewhere than upon the same lot on which such sign is located, including any outdoor advertising sign ("billboard") on which space is leased or rented for the purpose of conveying a commercial or non-commercial message.
- n. Portable Sign: Any sign not permanently attached to the ground or any permanent structure or a sign designed to be transported in any way including:
  - signs converted to "A" or "T" frames;
  - menu and sandwich-board signs.
- o. Projecting / Blade Sign: A sign which is affixed to a building or other structure where the sign face is approximately perpendicular to the building facade.
- p. Reader Board: A sign or portion thereof with characters, letters, or illustrations that can be changed or rearranged without altering the face or surface of the sign or signboard. A sign on which the message changes more than eight times per day shall be considered an animated sign and not a reader board sign. A sign on which the only copy that changes is an electronic or mechanical indication of

time or temperature shall be considered a "time and temperature" portion of a sign and not a reader board sign.

- q. **Sign Area:** The area contained entirely within the signboard (the flat surface of durable material upon which letters or other graphic content of a sign is displayed) or if no sign board is present the area contained entirely within the smallest rectangle which completely encloses the outer extremities of all graphic material of a sign.
- r. **Sign Height:** The distance from the base of the sign at normal grade to the top of the highest attached component of the sign or sign structure. 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 solely for the purpose of locating the sign.

In cases in which the normal grade cannot be reasonably determined, sign height shall be computed on the assumption that the normal grade is the elevation of the nearest point of the crown of the public street along which the lot has frontage or the grade of the land at the principal entrance to the principal structure on the lot, whichever is lower.

- s. **Temporary Sign:** Any sign which is used temporarily, relates to events of a temporary nature, or is not permanently mounted.

<b>Table 6.2.3. Signs Permitted According to Zoning District</b>						
		<b>Max.</b>	<b>Max.</b>			
		<b>Sign</b>	<b>Sign</b>	<b>Setbacks:</b>		
	<b>Permit</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Front</b>	<b>Side</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
<b>Type</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>(sq. ft.)</b>	<b>(ft.)</b>	<b>(ft.)</b>	<b>(ft.)</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>All Zoning Districts:</b>						
1. Personal Message	N	4	6	N/A	20	1/lot
2. Identification (Joint & Area)	N	4	8 (A)	N/A	N/A	1/lot
3. Construction	N	16(B)	N/A	N/A	20	N/A
4. Subdivision Sales	(C)	48	N/A	N/A	N/A	1/subdiv.
5. Subdivision	(C)	24	N/A	N/A	N/A	1/subdiv.
6. Real Estate Sales	N	8 (G)	6	N/A	20	1/lot
7. Temp. Open House	N	4	N/A	N/A	20	1/agency

						per lot
8. Garage/Yard Sale	N	4	N/A	N/A	20	1/lot
9. Informational / Directional	N	4	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
10. Portable / A-Frame Regulated by the Board of Selectmen – Annual Permit Required						
11. Temporary Business Signs	Y	16 or 30	N/A	(See Section 6.2.6.2.h.)		
<b>Business-A, Business-C and Industrial Zoning Districts:</b>						
12. Free-Standing	Y	50(D)	20	0	20	1/lot
13. Wall	Y	2/4E	(A)	N/A	10	1/business
14. Projecting / Blade	Y	8	(A)(H)	N/A	10	1/business
<b>Business-B Zoning Districts:</b>						
15. Free-Standing (Service Stations only)	Y	50(d)	20	0	20	1/lot
16. Wall	Y	2(F)	(A)	0	0	2/business*
17. Projecting / Blade	Y	8	(A)(H)	-4	0	1/business
<b>NOTES:</b>						
(A) No portion of such sign shall extend higher than the bottom of the sills of the windows of the second floor of a building or higher than the lowest portion of the eaves or, in the case of a gabled wall, no higher than a line equal in height to the lowest portion of the lower eave of any adjoining building wall, whichever of the above is lowest.						
(B) Aggregate sign area of all applicable signs.						
(C) Only as shown in Definitive Subdivision Plans as approved by the Community Planning and Development Commission consistent with Paragraph 6.2.1.1.						
(D) May not be larger than 75 square feet, if more than one business occupies the lot.						
*See Section 6.2.6.4.						

**NOTES (continued):**

- E) If the minimum distance from the building wall on which the sign is mounted is less than 100 feet from the centerline of the street which the sign faces, the maximum sign area shall be equal to 2 square feet per linear foot of said wall occupied by the establishment to which the sign relates; if such distance is more than 100 feet, maximum sign area shall be equal to 4 square feet per linear foot of said wall so occupied.
- (F) No wall sign for any non-residential establishment shall exceed a sign area equal to 2 square feet per linear footage of length of the front wall of the building occupied by the establishment to which the sign relates.
- (G) Real Estate Signs in the Industrial Zoning Districts are allowed 1 sign per business with a maximum sign area equal to 2 square feet per linear foot of said wall occupied by the establishment to which the sign relates without a sign permit.
- (H) Projecting / Blade Signs shall be at least eight (8) feet from the ground and may project no more than four (4) feet from the structure.

Additional requirements by type listed in Table 6.2.3.

1. Displayed for not more than 14 days.
2. May display resident's name, address, name of home occupation.
3. Free-standing only; to be removed prior to Occupancy Permit.
4. Free-standing only; to be removed prior to Occupancy Permit for the last house in the subdivision.
5. Free-standing only; at principal entrance to subdivision.
6. Free-standing only; to be removed by 14<sup>th</sup> day after transfer of property.
7. Plus 4 total directional/agency/event; one per intersection, displayed only from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the day of event.
8. Plus up to two directional signs/events; displayed only from 6:00 p.m. on the day before event to 6:00 p.m. on day of event.
9. Not more than two sign faces; 0' side setback on corner lots.
10. Parallel mounting on building wall only; no portion may project more than twelve inches from building wall; lesser front setback permitted for legally nonconforming buildings.
11. Perpendicular to building wall, no portion may project more than 4 feet from building; 10 feet minimum clearance above ground; no exposed guy-wires or turnbuckles.
12. Parallel mounting on building wall only; no portion may project more than six inches from building wall.
13. Perpendicular to building wall; no portion may project more than 4 feet from building; 10 feet minimum clearance above ground; no exposed guy-wires or turnbuckles.

#### 6.2.4. Exempt Signs:

Signs for which no permit is required are identified in Table 6.2.3 and Section 6.2.4. The following signs are exempt from this Section 6.2 and may be installed without permit, provided that the following is complied with:

- a. Authorized signs installed by the Town of Reading or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or any agency thereof, or with the express written permission thereof, for the purposes of traffic control or traffic or pedestrian safety or convenience, identification of public facilities or streets, or for direction to same; public notices and warnings required by and erected by Town, State, or Federal Government agencies.
- b. Directional signs; building markers.
- c. Political signs on private properties or vehicles only, provided that such sign shall not exceed six square feet in sign area, shall not be placed in such location as to constitute a traffic or pedestrian safety hazard, and shall not be displayed for more than forty-two days prior to the applicable election or more than two days following such election.
- d. Signs for churches and other federally tax-exempt institutions.
- e. Holiday lights and decorations which contain no commercial messages and which are displayed during the appropriate season.
- f. Works of art which contain no commercial messages with prior Town Planner or CPDC written approval.
- g. Fuel pump information signs, only as required by State law, are allowed and shall not affect the computation of allowable number of signs or aggregate sign size on a property.
- h. Any sign within a structure, not attached to any window or door, which is not visible from other properties or from any street right-of-way.
- i. Signs showing resident's name, historical plaque or marker, street address and/or name of a lawful home occupation taking place on the premises.
- j. Construction Signs, identifying contractors while doing construction work on a property.
- k. Temporary Subdivision Sales Signs and permanent Subdivision Identification Signs as approved in connection with the Definitive Plans for such subdivision and located at the principal entrance to the subdivision in an acceptable easement, not within any street right-of-way or access easement.

- l. Real Estate Sales Signs, including placards showing the words "Sold" or "Sale Pending or similar not exceeding one-third the size of the sales sign.
- m. Temporary Open House signs, not exceeding four square feet each, may be placed at a rate of one per agency per intersection per property and one on the open house property.
- n. Garage/Yard Sale Signs, limited to one sign located on the property on which the garage/yard sale is taking place and one at each of no more than two intersections of public streets.
- o. Any establishment located in a Business or Industrial Zoning District may display:
  - An "Open" Flag -- with dimensional requirements not to exceed four (4) feet by six (6) feet and may contain decorative graphics.
  - A National or State Flag – with emblems of religious, educational, governmental organization or any other federally tax-exempt organization, except when displayed in connection with commercial promotions or advertising. Dimensions shall not exceed four (4) feet by six (6) feet.

6.2.5. Prohibited Signs:

No private sign shall be installed or placed on public property, except by express permission of the Town or as otherwise allowed herein.

The following signs are prohibited in any zoning district:

- a. Signs which interfere with traffic or pedestrian safety, including any which may obstruct or interfere with traffic or pedestrian visibility or movement at any intersection or into or out of any property, or which by reason of position, shape, or color may interfere with, may obstruct the view of, or be confused with any authorized traffic sign, signal, or device; or which makes use of the words "STOP," "LOOK," "DANGER," or any other word, phrase, symbol, or character in such a manner as to interfere with, mislead, or confuse motorists or pedestrians.
- b. Signs placed or painted on any tree (other than street address), rock (other than street address), utility pole (other than yard sale sign), traffic safety sign, or similar fixture; painted on any building wall, bench, pavement, parking bumper or curb (other than a "Reserved" marking), or other similar outdoor surface.
- c. Internally illuminated signs, unless the background or signboard completely blocks illumination or glow except through the letters and graphics.

- d. Signs which contain a beacon of any type; which contain a spot light providing direct illumination to the public; which flash, revolve, rotate, move, or blink, or which fluctuate in light intensity; animated signs, that is, which use lighting to depict action or to create an illusion of movement or a special effect or scene.
- e. Any self illuminated or backlit signs which use LCD, LED, electronic messaging or digital technology, neon or similar signs except as displayed on the inside of windows subject to the provisions of Paragraph 6.2.6.2.c.
- a. Free-standing signs in a Business-B Zoning District (except as permitted at service stations).
- f. Internally illuminated signs in a Business-B Zoning District (except as permitted at service stations).
- g. Banners as permanent signs. Banners are allowed only as temporary signs four times a year for an annual total of 56 days with a sign permit, refer to Section 6.2.6.2.h. for full details.
- h. Signs located on any portion of a lot except a front yard or a side yard directly abutting a public street.
- i. Signs which do not meet and are not maintained to meet the provisions of this Section and all applicable building, wiring, health, and safety codes; or which are not neatly and legibly lettered.
- j. Reader Board Signs are not allowed except as price displays at gas stations.
- k. Balloons or blimps used as signs, a movable poster or panel sign, umbrellas containing any commercial message; or signs attached to or painted on vehicles traveling or parked on, or visible from any public right-of-way, unless such vehicle is used in the normal day-to-day operation of a business.

**6.2.6. Signs by Zoning District:**

Signs are allowed or permitted in each Zoning District and are specified in Table 6.2.3. and as follows:

**6.2.6.1. Business or Commercial Signs in Residential Zoning Districts:**

Legal nonconforming business or commercial operations in any residential zoning district shall follow the Business B-Zoning District regulations as specified in Subsection 6.2.6.4. except that such signs shall be set back a

minimum of twenty feet from any other lot and shall not be illuminated except during hours of operation.

6.2.6.2. Signs in Business and Industrial Zoning Districts:

The following signs are allowed in all Business and Industrial Zoning Districts. In addition, please refer to Table 6.2.3:

- a. All awnings and canopies shall be impervious to light so that no illumination or glow can be seen through it. Awnings may contain letters up to four inches in height stating only the name of the business and the street number without requiring a sign permit. Such lettering shall not count toward allowed sign area.

All other awnings or canopies with lettering or graphics shall require a sign permit and count as part of the allowed sign area.

All awnings and canopies shall have a minimum ground clearance of eight feet. Ground clearance shall be measured between the lowest point of the awning or canopy and the ground or sidewalk.

- b. Bulletin boards are allowed, provided that no free-standing or wall-mounted bulletin board may exceed twelve square feet in size.
- c. Window Signs: Window signs are encouraged on the inside surface of the glass. Permanently affixed, weather resistant, individual letters that are not subject to wear and tear are permitted on the exterior of the window. Temporary or permanent signs may without permit be attached to the inside of the glass surface of a window (a single structurally supported sheet of glass or a sash) or door, or placed within the premises closer than five feet from any window or door and situated or designed so that the sign's graphic content is visible from the outside through an window or door, provided that any such sign shall:

- (1) Be uniformly located only in thirty (30%) percent of the glass sheet or sash;
- (2) Contain no letters larger than eight (8) inches in height;
- (3) Be professional in appearance and good order shall be maintained at all times. Not be restricted with respect to graphic or message content, whether of a permanent or temporary nature, nor be restricted with respect to materials;
- (4) Have a sign area not to exceed six (6) square feet if the sign is not illuminated;

(5) In addition to the above, any illuminated sign shall be placed only in a window, and not in a door, and shall also:

- (a) Have a sign area not to exceed four (4) square feet;
- (b) Be placed no closer than ten feet from any other internally illuminated window sign on the premises. In cases where there is a door or other architectural break in the façade this buffer shall be reduced to seven (7) feet;
- (c) Be placed only in a window which contains no other signs of any type; and
- (d) Be illuminated only during hours of operation of the business establishment.

Notwithstanding the above, window signs shall also be allowed in conformity with the provisions of Paragraph 6.2.6.2.h. below.

- d. Directional and informational signs displaying text only, no corporate logos, or slogans are allowed provided that such signs shall be limited to wall and free-standing signs with a maximum of four square feet of sign area. One such sign, not exceeding six (6) feet in height, may be placed at each vehicular entrance or exit on a lot to identify such entrance or exit provided such sign does not constitute a traffic hazard; such signs shall not affect the computation of allowable number of signs or aggregate sign size on a property. One such sign, not exceeding six feet in height and four square feet of sign area, may be placed in conjunction with each drive-up bank teller window or machine provided that such sign shall not constitute a traffic hazard.
- e. Marquee signs are prohibited except when used in conjunction with an indoor movie theater and attached to the outside wall of the building, provided that the size of the marquee sign shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet, and the bottom of the marquee sign shall not be of a height of less than 8 feet above the grade directly below.
- f. Outdoor menu boards are prohibited except:
  - As a portable sign with a sign permit issued by the Board of Selectmen.
  - When used in conjunction with a restaurant having a drive up window. No more than three menu boards are allowed. The maximum aggregate sign area is 100 square feet. No one menu board may exceed 50 square feet. Any lettering shall not be legible from any other property or any street right-of-way.

- g. Informational and directional signs are allowed in all business and industrial zoning districts with a maximum sign area of four square feet per sign in accordance with Table 6.2.3.
- h. Temporary signs intended for business openings and re-openings, open houses, and special sales and promotional events for an individual business, are allowed, provided that:
- The individual business shall place no more than four (4) such signs per calendar year for an annual total of 56 days (except in conjunction with an organized Town-wide common special event as specified below),
  - All temporary signs shall have received a sign permit from the Building Inspector.
  - No such sign shall exceed sixteen (16) square feet in sign area or thirty (30) square feet in sign area for businesses that have a setback more than fifty (50) feet from the primary street upon which the business is located,
  - Any such sign shall be printed or legibly lettered on a rigid signboard or fabric banner,
  - In cases where renovation or construction includes removal of permanent signs, a temporary sign is allowed as follows:
    - dimensions shall be the same as temporary signs
    - may be used as a permanent sign
      - may remain during construction provided the construction or renovation is expeditiously pursued
      - must be removed upon the installation of the permanent sign
  - No such sign shall be placed so as to constitute a hazard to motorists or pedestrians,
  - If placed upon a window any such sign shall be included in the aggregate window area specified in Paragraph 6.2.6.2.c above

In the case only of common special events organized by a recognized association of businesses for which events a license has been granted by the Board of Selectmen, an individual participating business may display a temporary sign in conjunction with such an event, provided that such signs related to said events shall not exceed four per year.

Grand opening events for a new business may display for fourteen (14) days, upon issuance of a sign permit. Non-illuminated temporary banners, flags, balloons and streamers provided they are mounted in a way that does not pose a hazard to pedestrian or vehicular traffic and sight lines as determined by the Zoning Enforcement Officer. Only one grand opening sign permit per business may be issued until the property undergoes a change of use or change of ownership.

- i. Farm Stands and Garden Stands which do not have permanent windows shall be allowed, without permit or limitation as to number or material, to display temporary signs identifying goods offered for sale on the premises, provided that such signs are kept in good order and that the aggregate total

sign area of all such signs on a lot shall not exceed one square-foot per lineal feet of frontage of such lot. Decorative noncommercial flags may be displayed for sale.

- j. Clocks, not to exceed eight square feet in surface area per side or twelve feet in height, are allowed, provided that they display no advertising or commercial material.
- k. Time and temperature displays may be included in any free-standing or wall sign, and no more than twelve additional square feet of sign area may be added to the otherwise allowable sign area of such sign.
- l. For commercial buildings containing more than one business requiring wall signage, any wall sign provided for any such business must be in conformity with the requirements of this Section 6.2 and in accordance with the following stipulations concerning an overall master signage plan for such building. The master signage plan shall show not more than one wall sign per business within the building. However, at the owner's election not every business within the building need be provided with a wall sign within the proposed assemblage. No wall sign shall be issued a sign permit for any building for which a signage plan has been submitted or approved that is not included in or is not in conformity with the applicable signage plan. The master signage plan need not show the specific message content for any individual sign contained therein, so as to provide for change in business occupancy which may from time to time occur within the building:

(1) In all Business and Industrial Zoning Districts, the building owner may submit for approval to the Community Planning and Development Commission (CPDC), a master signage plan in accordance with the provisions of Section 6.2.6.4.1. The CPDC may issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the building showing the allocation within the maximum sign area as allowed according to Table 6.2.3. hereof among wall signs for businesses within the building. This master signage plan shall show the size, placement, materials, framing, graphic and design standards for each such sign and the assemblage thereof proposed within said allowable maximum sign area, together with proposed lighting and methods of attachment of all such signs.

Once the Certificate of Appropriateness has been approved by the CPDC, the Building Inspector shall issue a sign permit for any individual business sign if it conforms to the master signage plan.

#### 6.2.6.3. Signs in Business-A Zoning Districts:

Allowed Signs (also specified in Table 6.2.3):

- Free-Standing

- Wall
- Projecting
- Internally illuminated

Prohibited Signs:

- Banners as permanent signs
- A free-standing and wall sign for buildings that are not multi-tenant

All internally illuminated signs shall have a background or signboard that completely blocks illumination or glow such that light is only visible through the letters and graphics. All illuminated signs shall be turned off at the close of business.

A lot which contains not more than one establishment shall be allowed one free-standing sign or one wall sign or one projecting sign only. The street address number of the property shall be prominently displayed on such sign, and the sign shall in all respects conform to the above requirements.

A lot which contains more than one establishment shall be allowed a maximum of the following signs, all of which shall in every respect conform to the requirements of this Section:

- a. One free-standing sign identifying the property, and
- b. One wall or projecting sign per business occupying the ground floor and front wall of the building, except in cases where the provisions of Paragraph 6.2.6.2.L. are utilized, and
- c. One joint identification sign listing the names and logos of the establishments on the premises but containing no other advertising matter, mounted either on an appropriate building wall or on two posts, provided that such joint identification sign shall not exceed four (4) square feet in sign area, shall not exceed eight (8) feet in height, and shall not be located within a front, side, or rear yard as required in Subsection 5.1.2. hereof,
- d. Either the allowed free-standing sign or, if no free-standing sign is used, then at least one wall or projecting sign, shall prominently display the street address number of the property.

6.2.6.3.1 Off-Premises Signs:

The Board of Appeals may grant a Special Permit for an Off Premises Sign including an outdoor advertising sign (“billboard”) in a Business A zoning district under the following conditions:

- a. The proposed sign shall be in a Business A district immediately abutting an Interstate Highway, and within 25 feet of the main right of way of such highway excluding on and off ramps;
- b. The placement of the proposed sign shall be conditioned upon the elimination of no less than three non-conforming Off Premises signs elsewhere in the Town of Reading;
- c. There shall be no more than one Off Premises sign on any one lot that existed as a separate lot at the time of adoption of this section;
- d. The sign may be double sided with no greater than a 30 degree angle of separation between the two faces;
- e. Illumination of the sign shall be by external illumination only and illumination shall be limited to the hours of 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.;
- f. The sign shall not exceed 675 square feet on each of the two permitted faces;
- g. The maximum height of any Off Premises sign shall be 95 feet from the ground level upon which the sign is installed to the highest point of the structure;
- h. The nearest part of any Off Premises sign shall be no closer than 20 feet from an abutting property, and no less than 10 feet from the highway right of way; and
- i. The proposed use shall not be detrimental to the public good.

6.2.6.4. Signs in Business-B Zoning Districts:

Allowed Signs:

- Wall
- Projecting
- Awning Sign
- Externally illuminated signs

Prohibited:

- Free-Standing (except as permitted at service stations)
- Internally illuminated signs
- Banners as permanent signs

No sign permit shall be issued for any permanent sign in the Business-B Zoning District without the sign having been granted a Certificate of Appropriateness (Subsection 6.2.6.4.1.). Free-standing, wall and

projecting signs permitted in any Business-B Zoning District are specified in Table 6.2.3. No free-standing, internally illuminated, or Reader Board signs shall be permitted anywhere in a Business-B Zoning District. Free-standing signs will be allowed only for service stations.

All internally illuminated signs shall have a background or signboard that completely blocks illumination or glow such that light is only visible through the letters and graphics. All illuminated signs shall be turned off at the close of business.

Signs for properties containing more than one establishment:

For a lot which contains more than one business, a Certificate of Appropriateness may be granted for more than one sign, and a maximum of the following signs are allowed, all of which shall in every respect conform to the requirements of this Section:

- a. A business occupying the ground floor is allowed two (2) signs if one sign is a wall sign and the second one is a projecting / blade sign, an awning sign, or a wall sign that is located on a different building façade than the first wall sign.

The allowable sign area for the primary sign is equal to 2 square feet per linear footage of length of the front wall of the building occupied by the establishment to which the sign relates in accordance with Table 6.2.3. The secondary sign area shall not exceed half of the sign area allowed for the primary sign located on the principal frontage.

- b. One joint identification is allowed listing the names and logos of establishments on the premises provided the following conditions are met:
  - No additional advertising
  - Shall be mounted on the building wall closest to the entrance
  - Shall not exceed four (4) square feet in sign area
  - Shall not exceed eight (8) feet in height
  - Shall not project beyond the property line
- c. Allowance for an Additional Wall Sign: In addition to signs allowed above, a street address sign shall be permitted as follows:
  - Not to exceed four (4) square feet in sign area
  - Not to exceed six (6) feet in sign height
  - Shall only display the street address and number of the Property

6.2.6.4.1. **Certificate of Appropriateness / Community Planning and Development Commission (CPDC):**

The CPDC shall establish procedures for receiving and reviewing applications for signs in the Business B Zoning District, and for providing written decisions to the Building Inspector. The CPDC shall, in reviewing such applications, consider the design, arrangement, location, texture, materials, colors, lighting, and other visual characteristics of each proposed sign and its compatibility with its general surroundings with regard to the purposes outlined in Paragraph 6.2.1.

If the CPDC shall refuse to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for any proposed sign, it shall state in writing the reasons therefore, with suggestions as to how the proposal may be modified so as to be approved.

If the CPDC shall fail to issue or refuse to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness within forty-five (45) days of the date of a completed application being submitted, the Certificate shall be deemed to have been issued. An appeal from any decision of the CPDC may be made within twenty days of such decision being filed with the Town Clerk, to the Board of Selectmen, who may uphold, modify or overrule the action of the CPDC and grant a Certificate of Appropriateness. In those cases where proposed signs are included as part of plans for approval under Site Plan Review (Section 4.3.3) or PRD Special Permit review (Section 4.10), a Certificate of Appropriateness separate from such approval shall not be required and shall be combined with the review of said permit.

6.2.6.5. **Signs in Business-C Zoning Districts:**

Allowed Signs:

- Free-Standing
- Wall
- Projecting
- Internally illuminated signs

Prohibited Signs:

- Banners as permanent signs
- A free-standing and wall sign for buildings that are not multi-tenant

The allowed signs in the Business-C zoning district are subject to the corresponding provisions of paragraph 6.2.6.3. (Business-A). In addition, a wall sign consisting only of the name and corporate logo of the principal occupant of a building located within eighteen hundred feet of the centerline of an Interstate Highway may be displayed between the top course of windows and the parapet of such building provided that sign area not exceed fifty percent of the surface area described by the tops of

such windows, the parapet, and the wall corners, that letters and logo contained in or constituting such sign shall not exceed eight feet in height, that the lowest point of such sign shall not be closer than 48 feet above the ground immediately below, that such sign shall not be illuminated between the hours of 11:00 PM and sunrise, and that such sign shall be located on the building wall most directly facing said highway.

6.2.6.6. Signs in Industrial Zoning Districts:

Allowed Signs:

- Free-Standing
- Wall
- Projecting
- Internally illuminated

Prohibited Signs:

- Banners as permanent signs
- A free-standing and wall sign for buildings that are not multi-tenant

The allowed signs in the Industrial zoning district should conform to the provisions of Section 6.2.6.5. (Business-C). In conjunction with a Special Permit to Construct a Planned Unit Development (PUD) granted in accordance with Section 4.9. hereof, the Community Planning and Development Commission (CPDC) may, consistent with Subsection 6.2.1., allow modifications to any provision of this Section. The CPDC may allow one additional free-standing sign, not to exceed thirty-five feet in height or 144 square feet in sign area, in that portion of the PUD parcel's landscaped perimeter buffer area most closely adjacent to Route 128 but not closer than 500 feet from any other public street existing at the time of submission of a relevant Preliminary PUD Plan.

6.2.6.7. Signs in a PUD:

Notwithstanding anything in this Section 6.2 to the contrary, signs are allowed or permitted in a PUD only in accordance with Section 4.9.5.6. of these By-Laws.

6.2.6.8 Signs in Residential Districts:

Allowed Signs:

- Wall
- Projecting
- Externally illuminated signs

Prohibited:

- Internally illuminated signs

- Free-standing signs
- Banners as permanent signs

Except for identification signs (6.2.4.i.) or signs allowed in Subsection 6.2.6.1., no sign in any Residential Zoning District shall be illuminated in any manner. Decorative non-commercial banners or flags displayed on residential lots shall not be construed as signs for purposes of this By-Law. In connection with any Special Permit to Construct a Planned Residential Development (PRD) granted in accordance with Section 4.10. hereof, the Community Planning and Development Commission may allow modifications to any provision of this Section which is not inconsistent with the Purposes of this Section as specified in Subsection 6.2.1.

6.2.7. Removal of Defunct Signs:

In the event a business, other than a seasonal business, ceases operations for a period of time in excess of thirty days, the sign owner or lessee, or the property owner, shall immediately remove any identification or advertising of said business or any product or service sold thereby. If the sign conforms to the provisions of this Section, and if a permit has been requested within said thirty-day period for altering the same sign in conformity with this Section to identify a new business in the same location, such alteration shall be allowed. Changes in legend on any directory sign shall be exempt from the provisions of this paragraph.

6.2.8. Nonconforming Signs:

A nonconforming sign may not be enlarged or altered in any way which would increase its nonconformity. Should any nonconforming sign be damaged by any means to an extent of more than fifty percent of its replacement cost at the time of damage, it shall not be reconstructed except in conformity with the provisions of this Section 6.2.

or take any other action with respect thereto

### Background

The current zoning by-law Section 6.2, Signs has been confusing and in need of updating to make it more business friendly. The proposed revisions are intended to clarify and ease the administration and interpretation of the sign by-law.

Sign By-Law amendments were initially recommended to the CPDC by the Economic Development Committee (EDC). In 2008, the EDC surveyed local businesses to learn more about the issues facing them. The survey found that one of the biggest concerns was understanding and abiding by the sign by-law. The information from the survey provided

the EDC with a foundation to build on revising the Town's sign by-law. For the last several months the EDC spent a great deal of time going through the current sign by-laws to determine which sections needed revisions. A public forum was also held on January 13th to gain community input. After the January 13th public meeting, the EDC gave their proposed changes to the CPDC.