

ARTICLE #
(Two-thirds vote)

**AMEND ZONING BYLAW – SIGNS AND
ADVERTISING DEVICES**

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Bylaw as follows:

A. Section 7.7: EXTERIOR SIGNS

Delete the existing Section 7.7.4.2 and replace it with the following:

- 7.7.4.2 The height of a WALL SIGN shall not exceed 4.5 feet in the Business, Industrial, and Office Districts, 3 feet in the EAV and EAV 2 Districts, and 2 feet in all other Village Districts.

*[Note Section 7.7.4.2 currently reads:
The height of a WALL SIGN shall not exceed 3 feet in the Business, Industrial and Office Districts, and 2 feet in the Village Districts.]*

B. Section 7.8: FREESTANDING SIGNS

1. Delete existing Section 7.8.1 and replace it with the following:

- 7.8.1 One FREESTANDING SIGN shall be permitted on a LOT identifying a business located on the same LOT.

*[Note Section 7.8.1 currently reads:
One FREESTANDING SIGN shall be permitted on a LOT identifying a business located on the same LOT; and one FREESTANDING SIGN shall be permitted for a BUSINESS CENTER displaying an identification of the BUSINESS CENTER provided no other FREESTANDING SIGN shall be permitted within such BUSINESS CENTER, and provided further that in a Village District no other FREESTANDING or EXTERIOR SIGN shall be ERECTED to identify the BUSINESS CENTER.]*

2. Delete existing Section 7.8.5 (standards for freestanding signs in the Business, Industrial and Office Districts) and replace it with the following:

- 7.8.5 The following standards shall apply to FREESTANDING SIGNS in the Business, Industrial and Office Districts:

- 7.8.5.1 Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a business, such FREESTANDING SIGN shall be permitted in addition to any EXTERIOR SIGN permitted on the same LOT. The DISPLAY AREA of the FREESTANDING SIGN shall not exceed 12 square feet and the height shall not exceed 7 feet. If such a FREESTANDING SIGN is a MONUMENT SIGN, its DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 16 square feet, provided however that the height of a MONUMENT SIGN shall not exceed 4 feet, or 6 feet if its width does not

exceed 3 feet. Where the FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a motor vehicle service station the maximum permitted DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 24 square feet if the additionally permitted DISPLAY AREA is used solely for the posting of current prices of fuel and gasoline.

- 7.8.5.2 One FREESTANDING SIGN shall be permitted for a BUSINESS CENTER, provided that no other FREESTANDING SIGN identifying an individual business shall be permitted in the BUSINESS CENTER.
- 7.8.5.3 A BUSINESS CENTER is eligible for two FREESTANDING SIGNS when the LOT or LOTS of the BUSINESS CENTER have more than 300 feet of combined FRONTAGE on one or more STREETS, provided that not more than one FREESTANDING SIGN for the BUSINESS CENTER shall be allowed along a continuous FRONTAGE on one STREET that measures less than 300 feet.
- 7.8.5.4 Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a BUSINESS CENTER, each business located within such BUSINESS CENTER may display its identification on the FREESTANDING SIGN together with the identification of the BUSINESS CENTER, provided that such FREESTANDING SIGN remains of integrated and coherent design and complies with all applicable standards. The DISPLAY AREA of such a FREESTANDING SIGN shall not exceed a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 50 square feet, and its height shall not exceed 12.5 feet. If a FREESTANDING SIGN under this provision is a MONUMENT SIGN, its DISPLAY AREA may be increased to a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 62.5 square feet. The height of such a MONUMENT SIGN shall not exceed 10 feet.

[Note Section 7.8.5 currently reads:

7.8.5 The following standards shall apply to FREESTANDING SIGNS in the Business, Industrial and Office Districts:

7.8.5.1 Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a business, such FREESTANDING SIGN shall be permitted in addition to any EXTERIOR SIGN permitted on the same LOT. The DISPLAY AREA of the FREESTANDING SIGN shall not exceed 12 square feet and the height shall not exceed 7 feet. If such a FREESTANDING SIGN is a MONUMENT SIGN, its DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 16 square feet, provided however that the height of a MONUMENT SIGN shall not exceed 4 feet, or 6 feet if its width does not exceed 3 feet. Where the FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a motor vehicle service station the maximum permitted DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 24 square feet if the additionally permitted DISPLAY AREA is used solely for the posting of current prices of fuel and gasoline.

7.8.5.2 Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a BUSINESS CENTER, each business located within such BUSINESS CENTER may display its identification on the FREESTANDING SIGN together with the identification of the BUSINESS CENTER, provided that such FREESTANDING SIGN remains of integrated and coherent design and complies with all applicable standards. The DISPLAY AREA of such a FREESTANDING SIGN shall not exceed 20 square feet plus an additional 2

square feet per business name displayed, up to a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 24 square feet, and its height shall not exceed 10 feet. If a FREESTANDING SIGN under this provision is a MONUMENT SIGN, its DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 24 square feet plus an additional 2 square feet per business name displayed, up to a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 30 square feet. The height of such MONUMENT SIGN shall not exceed 6 feet, or 8 feet if its width does not exceed 4 feet.]

3. Delete Section 7.8.6 (standards for freestanding signs in the Village Districts) and replace it with the following new sections:

7.8.6 The following standards shall apply to FREESTANDING SIGNS in all Village Districts:

7.8.6.1 The DISPLAY AREA of a FREESTANDING SIGN identifying an individual business shall not exceed 8 square feet and the height shall not exceed 5 feet. If such a FREESTANDING SIGN is a MONUMENT SIGN, its DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 12 square feet, provided however that the height shall not exceed 4 feet, or 5 feet if its width does not exceed 3 feet. Where the FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a motor vehicle service station, the maximum permitted DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 16 square feet if the additionally permitted DISPLAY AREA is used solely for the posting of current prices of fuel and gasoline.

7.8.6.2 Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a BUSINESS CENTER, each business located within such BUSINESS CENTER may display its identification on the FREESTANDING SIGN together with the identification of the BUSINESS CENTER, provided that such FREESTANDING SIGN remains of integrated and coherent design and complies with all applicable standards.

7.8.7 The following standards shall apply to FREESTANDING SIGNS in the NAV, SAV, and WAV Districts:

7.8.7.1 One FREESTANDING SIGN may be ERECTED on a LOT provided that no BUILDING on the LOT is located within 30 feet of the sideline of the STREET nearest which the FREESTANDING SIGN is ERECTED.

7.8.7.2 Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a business no EXTERIOR SIGN shall be ERECTED on the same LOT.

7.8.7.3 The DISPLAY AREA of a FREESTANDING SIGN for a BUSINESS CENTER shall not exceed a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 12 square feet, and its height shall not exceed 6 feet. If such a FREESTANDING SIGN under this provision is a MONUMENT SIGN, its DISPLAY AREA may be a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 20 square feet. The height of such MONUMENT SIGN shall not exceed 4 feet.

- 7.8.8 The following standards shall apply to FREESTANDING SIGNS in the EAV and EAV-2 Districts:
- 7.8.8.1 Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a business in the EAV District, one EXTERIOR SIGN shall be permitted.
 - 7.8.8.2 One BUSINESS CENTER sign shall be permitted for a BUSINESS CENTER, provided no other FREESTANDING SIGN identifying an individual business shall be permitted in the BUSINESS CENTER.
 - 7.8.8.3 A BUSINESS CENTER is eligible for two FREESTANDING SIGNS when the LOT or LOTS have more than 300 feet of combined FRONTAGE on one or more STREETS, provided that not more than one FREESTANDING SIGN for the BUSINESS CENTER shall be allowed along a continuous FRONTAGE on one STREET that measures less than 300 feet.
 - 7.8.8.4 The DISPLAY AREA of a FREESTANDING SIGN identifying a BUSINESS CENTER shall not exceed a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 27 square feet, and its height shall not exceed 9 feet. If a FREESTANDING SIGN under this provision is a MONUMENT SIGN, its DISPLAY AREA may be a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 40 square feet. The height of such MONUMENT SIGN shall not exceed 8 feet.

And, renumber current Section 7.8.7 to become Section 7.8.9.

[Note Section 7.8.6 currently reads:

7.8.6 The following standards shall apply to FREESTANDING SIGNS in the Village Districts:

7.8.6.1 One FREESTANDING SIGN may be ERECTED on a LOT provided that no BUILDING on the LOT is located within 30 feet of the sideline of the STREET nearest which the FREESTANDING SIGN is ERECTED.

7.8.6.2 Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a business in the NAV, SAV, or WAV Districts, no EXTERIOR SIGN shall be ERECTED on the same LOT. Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a business in the EAV District, one EXTERIOR SIGN shall be permitted. The DISPLAY AREA of such a FREESTANDING SIGN shall not exceed 8 square feet and the height shall not exceed 5 feet. If such a FREESTANDING SIGN is a MONUMENT SIGN, its DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 12 square feet, provided however that the height shall not exceed 4 feet, or 5 feet if its width does not exceed 3 feet. Where the FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a motor vehicle service station, the maximum permitted DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 16 square feet if the additionally permitted DISPLAY AREA is used solely for the posting of current prices of fuel and gasoline.

7.8.6.3 Where a FREESTANDING SIGN identifies a BUSINESS CENTER, each business located within such BUSINESS CENTER may display its identification on the FREESTANDING SIGN together with the identification of the BUSINESS CENTER, provided that such FREESTANDING SIGN remains of integrated and coherent design and complies with all applicable standards. The DISPLAY AREA of such a FREESTANDING SIGN shall not exceed 8 square feet plus an additional 2 square feet

per business name displayed, up to a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 12 square feet, and its height shall not exceed 6 feet. If a FREESTANDING SIGN under this provision is a MONUMENT SIGN, its DISPLAY AREA may be increased to 12 square feet plus an additional 2 square feet per business name displayed, up to a maximum DISPLAY AREA of 20 square feet. The height of such MONUMENT SIGN shall not exceed 4 feet, or 6 feet if its width does not exceed 3 feet.]

C. Section 7.13: SIGNS Requiring a Special Permit from the Planning Board

In Section 7.13.1, which defines the scope and limits of the Planning Board's special permit authority for signs, delete Section 7.13.1.2 and replace it with the following:

- 7.13.1.2 EXTERIOR SIGNS with dimensions in excess of those permitted under Sections 7.7 subject to the following limitations:
- a) no SIGN wider than one and one half times the maximum width otherwise permitted, and
 - b) no SIGN larger than twice the otherwise permitted maximum DISPLAY AREA, and
 - c) any such other limitation as the Planning Board may find appropriate to further the purpose of this Section as stated in Section 7.1.

[Note Section 7.13.1.2 currently reads:

7.13.1.2 SIGNS with dimensions in excess of those permitted under Sections 7.7 and 7.8, subject to the following limitations:

- a) no SIGN higher or wider than one and one half times the maximum height or width otherwise permitted, and*
- b) no SIGN larger than twice the otherwise permitted maximum DISPLAY AREA, and*
- c) no FREESTANDING SIGN larger than 40 square feet in DISPLAY AREA or higher than 10 feet, and*
- d) any such other limitation as the Planning Board may find appropriate to further the purpose of this Section as stated in Section 7.1.]*

, or take any other action relative thereto.

SUMMARY

This article is intended to streamline the existing sign permitting process so as to reduce the burden on applicants and to improve the allocation and effective use of Town resources. This article proposes changes to three sections of the existing Bylaw: Section 7.7 (EXTERIOR SIGNS); Section 7.8 FREESTANDING SIGNS; and Section 7.13 (SIGNS Requiring a Special Permit from the Planning Board).

Part I. EXTERIOR SIGNS

This article proposes an increase in the by-right height for wall signs from 3 feet to 4.5 feet in the Business, Industrial and Office Districts and from 2 feet to 3 feet in the East Acton Village Districts. Since 2011, 20 special permits for wall signs have been

requested and all were granted. Of these, 5 permits were granted to applicants seeking to erect wall signs higher than 2 or 3 feet, respectively. By increasing the by-right maximum allowable height, the number of special permit requests for signs could have been reduced by 25%.

Part II. FREESTANDING SIGNS

Since 2011, 6 special permits have been granted to applicants seeking to increase the dimensions or quantity of business center signage. This article proposes to increase the by-right display area and height of business center signs in the Business, Office, Industrial, EAV and EAV-2 Districts. For business centers in the aforementioned zoning districts, the number of by-right business center signs may be increased from 1 to 2 if the lot or lots' frontage meets the minimum requirements. The proposed changes encourage business centers to utilize cohesive business center signage for identification instead of multiple individual business signs.

Part III. SIGNS Requiring a Special Permit from the Planning Board

Increasing the maximum by-right sign display area and height can reduce the need for applicants to seek sign special permits. Savings in time and money benefit the business owner, while a reduction in the number of sign special permit applications allows the Planning Board to more effectively allocate its time and resources. This article seeks to eliminate the special permit option for freestanding signs; instead special permits are available for exterior signs no more than one and one half times the maximum allowable width and twice the maximum allowable display area. By eliminating special permits for freestanding signs that exceed the quantity and dimensions allowed by Section 7.8, the proposed changes favor streamlined business center signage over multiple individual business signs.

Since 2011, a total of 40 signs have been approved for 72 different waivers including display area, height, quantity, location, and other factors. These special permits are often granted without amendments, and hearings are very rarely attended by concerned abutters. Expanding the by-right options for business owners may decrease the quantity of special permit applications, thus reducing the financial and time-related burden on the applicant and making better use of Town resources.

Direct inquiries to: Roland Bartl, Planning Director: planning@acton-ma.gov / (978) 929-6631
Selectman assigned:

Recommendations:	<u>Board of Selectmen</u>	<u>Finance Committee</u>	<u>Planning Board</u> Recommended
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