

Civic Federation Input to Sign Ordinance Revisions

This summary indicates how the latest draft of the comprehensive revisions to the sign ordinance addresses input by the Civic Federation at its May 3, 2011 meeting.

1. Sign Ordinance Preamble

- Expand the Preamble to explain the rationale behind the treatment of commercial and non-commercial signs.
 - Agree: 49
 - Disagree: 0
 - Can't Decide At This Time: 5

Done? No. There is no explicit explanation for why commercial messages are treated differently.

2. List of Legally-Placed Signs

- Include examples of the types of commercial and non-commercial signs allowed on private property and on public property.
 - Agree: 51
 - Disagree: 0
 - Can't Decide At This Time: 3

Done? Partly. In some cases pictures show legally placed signs, but are not labeled.

3. Provide Definitions

- Define the terms public land, public lands, public property, public right-of-way, and public easement area.
 - Agree: 49
 - Disagree: 0
 - Can't Decide At This Time: 2

Done? No. Some new definitions included, but not the ones we asked for.

- Clarify treatment of government property that is not Arlington County property.
 - Agree: 48
 - Disagree: 2
 - Can't Decide At This Time: 1

Done? No. This is not addressed.

4. Public Easement Areas

- The revision should reduce restrictions on reasonable signage in the utility strip in between the sidewalk and curb in low-density (especially residential) areas. Rules for the placement of signs in the area should be drawn, to the extent feasible, with respect to the physical conditions rather than harder-to-discern underlying property rights.
 - Agree: 26
 - Disagree: 9
 - Can't Decide At This Time: 19

Done? Yes and No. Restrictions are reduced, but distinction still exists for "right of way" which is often not self-evident.

- The Sign Ordinance should include information about how easements affect the property owner's right to display both commercial and non-commercial signs.
 - Agree: 50
 - Disagree: 2
 - Can't Decide At This Time: 0

Done? No. Easements are not defined/addressed.

5. Signage in the Public Right-of-Way

- Expand exceptions to include temporary signs for neighborhood signs such as lost pet, yard sale, or community events during a reasonable period related to the event.
 - Agree: 56
 - Disagree: 1
 - Can't Decide At This Time: 3

Done? Yes, but placement is restricted to weekends only and within ½ mile from the event.

6. Political Signs

- Enable signs on public or private property related to a political event occurring at that property.

- Agree: 40
- Disagree: 4
- Can't Decide At This Time: 15

Done? Yes. "Temporary signs" would now be allowed in many cases where they are not currently allowed.

- Clarify when and where issue-oriented signs are permitted on public and private property.

- Agree: 59
- Disagree: 1
- Can't Decide At This Time: 3

Done? Not really. It is still very, very "unclear" what the rules are for issue signs not related to an election or primary.

7. Lighted Signs

- The Sign Ordinance should include luminescence standards for lighted signs.

- Agree: 61
- Disagree: 0
- Can't Decide At This Time: 0

Done? Yes. However the lighting standards have not been defined/explained.

8. Site Plan Exceptions

- The Sign Ordinance — or another section of the Zoning Ordinance — should require that exceptions have public notice before being approved via Site Plan.

- Agree: 60
- Disagree: 0
- Can't Decide At This Time: 4

Done? No. This is not addressed.

9. Sandwich Board (Sidewalk) Signs

- Allow retail and restaurant establishments to use one sandwich board sign, which would not be part of their total signage calculation, provided that the sign is no larger than six square feet; is located on a frontage that has adequate sidewalk clear-width; and is placed so that it does not diminish or encroach into the pedestrian clear zone.

- Agree: 34
- Disagree: 16
- Can't Decide At This Time: 5

Done? Mostly. Latest draft seems to intend to protect clear-width, but the phrasing used would still seem to allow some unnecessary encroachments.

10. Organization

- Reorganize the Sign Ordinance to make it easier for different kinds of users to access the information they need.

- Agree: 54
- Disagree: 0
- Can't Decide At This Time: 5

Done? Partly. The new organization is largely based on three buckets of zoning districts that are not currently used for any other purpose.