

Media Release



bluffton
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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PUBLIC/POLITICAL REMINDER: Permitting/Permission/Removal of Political Signs in the Town of Bluffton & Unincorporated Beaufort County

As the political season begins, please see below the parameters of where political signs can be placed. Please be mindful the Town of Bluffton and unincorporated Beaufort County have different ordinances which pertain to sign placement.

Town of Bluffton Political Sign Regulations:

If signs are placed within **Town of Bluffton** limits, they **DO NOT require a permit** provided the restrictions below are met from Section 5.13.10.C of the Unified Development Ordinance, a copy of which is provided as Attachment 1. Also, Section 6-98 of the Code of Ordinances for the Town of Bluffton, a copy of which is provided as Attachment 2, specifies political signs are not allowed in public rights-of-way unless permitted by the Town Manager. In this regard, the following shall apply:

1. Unless otherwise allowed, signs shall not be located on public property or in the public rights-of-way and must be confined wholly to placement on private property, with permission of the property owner;
2. The Town Manager has authorized the placement of political signs on public property at the following locations:
 - a. Landscaped corners at Bluffton's Four Way Stop;
 - b. Buckwalter Place Blvd (Publix Shopping Center) median beyond the entryway sign to Buckwalter Place; and
 - c. North/West corner of intersection at May River Road and Buckwalter Parkway (i.e. Adjacent to Barton's Run neighborhood).

3. Signs shall not be placed earlier than 60 days prior to the election or referendum to which they apply;
4. Signs shall be removed within five days after the election or referendum to which they apply;
5. Signs for candidates in a runoff election may be maintained until the final election to which the signs apply; and
6. Signs shall not exceed six square feet in area per sign face, 12 square feet in total sign area, and shall not exceed a height of four feet.

Unincorporated Beaufort County Political Sign Regulations:

If signs are going to be placed outside of Town of Bluffton limits in unincorporated **Beaufort County**, they **DO require a permit** through the County offices and must adhere to the following regulations found in the Beaufort County Community Development Code Section 5.6.60, a copy of which is provided as Attachment 3. The major points of Beaufort County political-sign regulations are as follows:

1. A sign permit fee of \$5.00 is required which is a flat fee for any and all signs a candidate wants to place. This single permit will allow each candidate to post an unlimited number of signs;
2. On private property along major corridors, freestanding political signs must be no closer than ten (10) feet from the highway right-of-way. Major corridors are US 21, US 17, US 278, SC 170, SC 802, SC 280, SC 46, SC 116, and SC 163. Sign placement on other roads may be placed on property lines.
3. Political signs may be displayed or erected at any time within an election year; and
4. All political signs must be removed within 48 hours after the election.

Determining Town Boundary and Public Rights-of-Way:

Two main questions staff receives regarding political signage are, "How do I know if a property is in the Town of Bluffton or not?" and "How do I know where the public right-of-way is?"

Below is a link to the Town of Bluffton Zoning Map that will help you determine if the property is located within the Town of Bluffton or not. If the property is in an area that is gray in color it is not in the Town of Bluffton and subject to Beaufort County rules. All other properties are in the Town of Bluffton.

<http://www.townofbluffton.us/gallery/PublicGallery/PDF/zoningmap.pdf>

While the only exact way to identify the location of public right-of-way is to find a marker or use a property survey, a general rule of thumb is that the property on the house side of a sidewalk or bike path is located outside of the public right-of-way. If a sidewalk or bike path does not exist look for utility lines and ditches and walk three steps past the utility or ditch towards the house side. Generally, this location is outside the public right-of-way.

If you are unsure if the property in question is the jurisdiction of the Town of Bluffton or unincorporated Beaufort County, please free feel to call the Town of Bluffton's public information office at 843.706.4534.

Both the Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County Code Enforcement Officers may confiscate a political sign if it is placed in a public right-of-way. In the event this occurs please call either the Town of Bluffton at (843) 706-4522 or Beaufort County at (843) 255-2066 and you may be able to retrieve your sign.

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Attachments:

1. Town of Bluffton Unified Development Ordinance Section 5.13.10.C Excerpt
2. Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances Section 6-98 Excerpt
3. Beaufort County Community Development Code Section 5.6.60 Excerpt

Attachment 1

Town of Bluffton
Unified Development Ordinance
Article 5: Design Standards
5.13.10 Temporary Signs

- C. The following signs shall be allowed without a permit provided the restrictions for the type of sign are met.
 - 1. Political Signs:
 - a. Political signs shall not be located on public property or in public rights-of-way, and must be confined wholly to placement on private property, with permission of the property owner;
 - b. Signs shall not be erected earlier than 60 days prior to the election or referendum to which they apply;
 - c. Signs shall be removed within five days after the election or referendum to which they apply. Signs for candidates in a runoff election may be maintained until the final election to which the signs apply; and
 - d. Signs shall not exceed six square feet in area per sign face, 12 square feet in total sign area, and shall not exceed a height of four feet.

Attachment 2

Town of Bluffton

Code of Ordinances

Chapter 6 Businesses and Business Regulations

Article IV. - Postings, Signs, Banners, Etc.

Sec. 6-98. - Public and private property; political signs.

- (a) It shall be unlawful to place any advertisement, notice, or sign of any nature on public property within the corporate limits without prior approval of the Town Manager, or on any private property without prior approval of the owner thereof.
- (b) The items listed in subsection (a) of this section shall include a banner, canvas, placard, picture, paper, circular, printed matter, or any other similar means or device whatsoever.
- (c) It shall be unlawful to post political signs of any nature on public property including, but not limited to, power poles, telephone poles, street signs, etc.

Attachment 3

**Beaufort County, SC
Community Development Code
Article 5: Supplemental to Zones
Division 5.6: - Sign Standards**

5.6.60 Temporary Signs

- A. **Allowed Sign Types.** The following types of signs are classified as temporary signs:
1. Special event signs which are in the nature of noncommercial advertising;
 2. Grand opening, going out of business and sale signs of businesses and services;
 3. Signs for work under construction;
 4. Land subdivision or development signs;
 5. Signs advertising the sale or lease of property upon which they are located; and
 6. Political signs.
 - a. On private property along major corridors, freestanding political signs must be no closer than ten (10) feet from the highway right-of-way. Major corridors are US 21, US 17, US 278, SC 170, SC 802, SC 280, SC 46, SC 116, and SC 163. Sign placement on other roads may be placed on property lines.
 - b. Political signs may be displayed or erected at any time within an election year. Political candidates are required to obtain a sign permit. All political signs must be removed within 48 hours after the election.
 - c. If approval for placement within the state rights-of-way is granted to the political candidates, the candidates shall present the approval whenever they apply for the county permit.
 - d. A single permit will allow each candidate to post an unlimited number of signs. Only the candidates whose name will appear on the ballot for an upcoming election may display signs.
 - e. Impoundment of Political Signs. See Section 5.6.70.B.
- B. **Area, Height, Location.**
1. **Area.** The total area of temporary signs shall not exceed 80 square feet.
 2. **Height.** The maximum height of temporary signs shall not exceed ten (10) feet measured from the highest part of any sign or supporting structure and existing ground level except special event promotional banners.
 3. **Location.** No off-premises temporary sign, except those identified in Subsections 5.6.50.A.5 shall be located nearer than 100 feet to any church, cemetery, public building, historic site or district and intersection of two or more public streets or highways.
- C. **Time Limits on Erection.**

1. **Special Event Signs.** Special event signs may be erected no sooner than 30 days preceding a special event, and shall be removed within 48 hours following the special event. Temporary signs for special events shall be permitted for no more than 32 days at a time. The signs are limited to 4 times a calendar year per site for a total of 128 days.
 2. **Grand Opening Signs.** Grand opening signs shall be erected for a period not to exceed 30 days.
 3. **Work Under Construction Signs.** Work under construction signs pertaining to owners, architects, engineers, contractors, development agencies, financial institutions and the like may be erected on the construction site during construction and shall be removed within 30 days following completion of the project.
 4. **Announcement of Subdivision of Land.** Signs announcing the subdivision of land may be erected on the land being developed and shall be removed when 75 percent of the lots are conveyed or after two years, whichever comes first.
- D. **Permits.** Unless exempted in Subsection 5.6.10.B.4, temporary signs must be permitted in the same manner as permanent signs.

5.6.70 Administration

- A. **Display of Permit.** All signs for which a permit has been issued shall be in compliance with the following:
1. **Display of Permit Tag.** All permit tags issued for the erection of a sign shall be displayed on the sign and shall be readily visible.
 2. **Relocation of Permit Tag.** Under no circumstances may the permit tag be removed from one sign to another, nor may the sign to which it is attached be relocated to another location.
 3. **Return of Permit Tag.** If a sign is dismantled, removed or the ownership transferred, the permit tag shall be removed, returned to the Community Development Department and a new application made as appropriate.
 4. **Lost or Illegible Permit Tag.** If a permit tag is lost, defaced, destroyed or otherwise becomes illegible through normal wear or an act of vandalism, a new application shall be made to the Community Development Department.
- B. **Impoundment of Signs.**
1. **Signs Subject to Removal without Notice.** The Code Enforcement Department shall have the authority to remove, without notice to the owners thereof, and impound for a period of ten days, signs placed within any street or highway right-of-way; signs attached to trees, fence posts, telephone and utility poles, or other natural features; and signs erected without a permit.
 2. **Impoundment of Signs Erected without Permit, but Otherwise in Compliance.** When a sign requiring a permit under the terms of this Division is erected without a Sign Permit, the Code Enforcement Department shall use the following procedure:
 - a. **Violation Sticker.** The Code Enforcement Department shall issue a Notice of Warning to the owner of the sign that is in violation. The Notice of Warning shall include instructions to call the Code Enforcement Department immediately for permitting compliance.

- b. **Failure to Obtain Permit.** If the owner of the sign fails to contact the Code Enforcement Department, to bring the sign into conformance with this article and get a permit for the sign, the Code Enforcement Department shall have the sign removed and impounded without any further notice.
- C. **Recovery and Disposal of Impounded Signs.** The owner of a sign impounded may recover the sign upon the payment of \$2.00 for each square foot of such impounded sign, prior to the expiration of the ten-day impoundment period. If it is not claimed within ten days, the Code Enforcement Department shall have authority to either discard or sell the sign.