

Chapter 58 - SIGNS

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Sec. 58-1. - Title.

This chapter shall hereafter be known and cited as the "Coweta County Sign Ordinance."

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-2. - Statement of findings.

The county finds that signs provide an important medium through which individuals, businesses, and government may convey a variety of messages. Left unregulated, however, signs can become a threat to the public health and safety as a traffic hazard and a detriment to property values and the overall economic growth of Coweta County as an aesthetic nuisance. See, e.g., Scenic America, Billboards & Sign Control available at <http://www.scenic.org>; Jerry Weitz, Ph.D., AICP, The Public Purpose of Rowell's Sign Ordinance and the Implications of Doing Without It: A Position Paper (December 7, 1999) available at <http://roswellgov.com>; Street Graphics and the Law, 2004 Revised Edition, Daniel Mandelker, Andrew Bertucci, and William Ewald In particular, based on the cited

materials and the studies referenced therein as well as other related studies included in the county's file, the county finds that unregulated signs:

- (a) Can be a safety hazard to drivers and pedestrians;
- (b) Can create unsafe, cluttered and aesthetically blighted thoroughfares throughout the county;
- (c) Can hamper economic growth;
- (d) Can lower property values;
- (e) Can adversely impact public investments;
- (f) Can degrade the utility of public safety signs; and
- (g) Can adversely impact the aesthetic quality of the community and surrounding environment.

The county also finds the following:

- (a) There is a substantial difference between signs erected by public authority and signs erected by private citizens or businesses. Signs erected by public authority are virtually all erected for the purpose of maintaining the public safety either through direct control of traffic or through provision of such type signage as street signs which enable the traveling public to know where they are located and to find where they are going. As such, with the exception of signs identifying government buildings, virtually all government signs are erected purely for public safety purposes. Moreover, their use in the public right-of-way is necessary to ensure their visibility to the motoring public. The county finds that public utility signs are frequently of the same nature as those signs erected by governmental entities in that they provide necessary information to safeguard the public from downed power lines and from street excavations. Even where signs serve a propriety purpose, such as identifying markings on utility polls, those signs are marked primarily for the purpose of benefiting the public generally through identification of locations where there may be temporary losses of power.
- (b) Some signage has a single targeted function and identification of such signage by description is impossible without referring to its function. For instance, address numerals are used for the sole purpose of locating addresses, which is of benefit to persons looking for those addresses and is essential to public safety personnel responding to emergencies. While such signage is referenced based upon the function it serves within the context of this chapter, the provisions of this chapter are unrelated to the content of the speech provided and allow maximum expressive potential to sign owners.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-3. - Statement of purpose.

By enacting this chapter, the county intends:

- (a) To balance the rights of individuals, businesses, and government to convey their messages through signs and the right of the public to be protected against the unrestricted proliferation of signs;
- (b) To afford the business community equal and fair opportunity to advertise and promote its products and services without discrimination;
- (c) To preserve and promote the public health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Coweta County;
- (d) To improve traffic and pedestrian safety;
- (e) To maintain and enhance the visual environment, and preserve the right of citizens and visitors to enjoy Coweta County's scenic beauty;
- (f) To protect property values of nearby public and private property by minimizing possible adverse effects and visual blight caused by signs;
- (g) To avoid the harmful aspects of the unrestricted proliferation of signs;
- (h) To promote economic development;
- (i) To enable the fair and consistent enforcement of sign regulations; and
- (j) To promote the purposes stated in this section by regulating signs based on objective standards, including, but not limited to height and size, and without regard to the content of the sign message.
- (k) This chapter is adopted under the authority of Coweta County in furtherance of the more general purposes set forth in the zoning ordinance. This chapter is adopted and hereafter amended pursuant to Article IX, Section II, Paragraph IV of the Constitution of the State of Georgia and the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-4. - Applicability.

The regulations set forth below shall apply and govern in all zoning districts. Within the unincorporated portions of the County no sign shall be erected or maintained unless it is in compliance with this chapter.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-5. - Definitions.

[The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this chapter, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:]

Abandoned sign. Any sign that contains or exhibits broken panels, visible rust, visible rot, damaged support structures, or missing letters or which is otherwise dilapidated, unsightly, or unkempt, and for which no person accepts maintenance responsibility.

Animated sign. Any sign, or part of a sign, that uses any movement or change of lighting or color to depict action or create a special effect or scene.

Audible sign. Any sign which emits a sound which is audible or emits a signal which can be converted into audible sounds, whether by radio or other means.

Awning/canopy sign. Any sign that is a part of, or attached to, an awning, canopy or other fabric, plastic or structural protective cover over a door, entrance, window, or outdoor service area. A marquee is not a canopy.

Banner. A sign other than a flag with or without characters, letters, illustrations or ornamentation applied to cloth, paper, or fabric that is intended to be hung without a frame. Neither flags nor canopy signs are considered banners.

Beacon. Any light with one or more beams directed into the atmosphere or directed at one or more points not on the same lot as the light source; also, any light with one or more beams that rotate or move.

Canopy sign. A sign imposed upon or painted on any roof-like structure either permanently or temporarily, extended over an entry sidewalk or walkway, which may be mounted flush or suspended.

Changeable copy sign. Any sign that incorporates changing lights, lettering, or images to form a sign message or messages, whether such changes are accomplished electronically or manually.

Fall zone. An area equal to 133 percent of the height of the structure in every direction.

Flag. Any fabric or bunting containing colors, patterns, or symbol used as a symbol of a government or other entity or organization.

Free-standing sign. A sign that is not mounted on a principal building.

Lot. A parcel of land that is of sufficient size to meet minimum zoning requirements for lot area, coverage, and use and that can provide such yards and other open spaces as required by the zoning standards.

Monument sign. A permanent ground sign designed so that the base of the sign face is flush with the supporting base, and the supporting base is flush with the ground and extends the full width of the sign face or a sign that is attached to a monument face.

Moving sign. A sign which revolves, rotates, swings, undulates, or otherwise attracts attention through the structural movement of parts.

Nonconforming sign. Any sign that does not conform to the provisions of this chapter at the effective date of this chapter, or any amendment thereto.

Obscene. Material is obscene if to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, taken as a whole, it predominantly appeals to the prurient interest, that is, a shameful or morbid interest in nudity, sex or excretion; the material taken as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value; and the material depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined as:

- (a) Acts of sexual intercourse, heterosexual or homosexual, normal or perverted, actual or simulated;
- (b) Acts of masturbation;
- (c) Acts involving excretory functions or lewd exhibition of the genitals;
- (d) Acts of bestiality or the fondling of sex organs of animals; or
- (e) Sexual acts of flagellation, torture, or other violence indicating a sadomasochistic sexual relationship.

Out-of-store marketing device. Any facility or equipment which is located outside of a primary building on a site zoned for nonresidential uses, which is used for the primary purpose of providing a product or service without the owner's or agent's immediate presence, and which is manufactured to include a color, form, graphic, illumination, symbol, and/or writing thereon to communicate information regarding the product or service provided thereby to the public. Examples of out-of-store marketing devices include: fuel pumps, bank ATM units, vending machines, newspaper racks, drink machines, ice boxes, and phone books. Where such out-of-store marketing devices are too small to be legible to the traveling public on neighboring rights-of-way and are otherwise nonremovable without damage to the equipment's surface, they do not require a permit and are not subject to overall sign limitations for the lot on which they appear.

Pennant, streamer. Any lightweight plastic, fabric, or other material, whether or not containing a message of any kind, suspended from a rope, wire, or string, usually in a series, designed to move in the wind.

Permit. A sign permit reviewed, approved, and issued by the Coweta County Building Department.

Permittee. The person and/or entity owning or leasing the land on which the sign is erected or for which an application has been submitted.

Portable sign. A sign which is not permanently affixed to the ground or to a structure, including but not limited to signs on trailers or signs mounted or painted on vehicles which are parked in such a manner as to serve the purpose of a sign.

Principal building. The building in which the principal use of the lot is conducted. Nonresidential lots with multiple principal uses may have multiple principal buildings, but storage buildings, garages, and other structures with clearly accessory uses shall not be considered principal buildings.

Projecting sign. A sign attached to and projecting from the wall or overhang of a building that has a plane that is at a 90-degree angle from the wall.

Public sign. Any sign erected by a governmental entity.

Roof sign. Any sign erected and constructed wholly on and over the roof of a building, or supported by the roof structure.

Sign. A sign is an object, device, display, or structure, or thereof, displayed outdoors or visible from a public way, which is used to advertise, identify, display, direct or attract attention to an object, person, institution, organization, business, product, service, event or location; or to express a point of view, by any means including words, letters, figures, designs, symbols, advertising flags, fixtures, colors, illuminations or projected images.

Sign, traffic control. A sign to regulate the safe and ordered flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Suspended sign. A sign attached to the underside of a horizontal plane or arm and is supported by the horizontal plane. The horizontal plane or arm is attached to a column or wall.

Temporary sign. Any sign that is not permanently mounted and is mounted on a stake or metal frame with a thickness or diameter not greater than one and one-half inches.

Wall sign. A sign which is mounted parallel on the exterior surface of a building.

Window sign. Any sign that is placed inside a window or upon the window panes or glass, either inside or outside the building, and is visible from the exterior of the structure.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07; Ord. No. 026-08, 8-19-08; Ord. No. 024-11, 10-18-11)

Sec. 58-6. - General provisions.

(a) *Permit required.* A permit shall be required for the erection, alteration or reconstruction of any sign unless otherwise noted and shall be issued by the building department after approval by the planning department in accordance with the regulations contained in this chapter. This requirement includes but is not limited to conversion of a sign to a tri-vision, LED, or similar technology, among other work.

(b) *Design and materials.*

(1) All signs shall be designed and constructed in accordance with applicable provisions of the rules and regulations of the Coweta County Building Department.

(2) Unless provided otherwise, all freestanding signs in nonresidential zoning districts shall be monument signs.

(3) (a) The base and structure of monument permitted signs located in the Quality Development Corridor (QDC) overlay zoning district shall be composed of brick, stone, masonry-backed stucco, wood or other category A materials as detailed in section 246.1.5(1)(a) of the Coweta County Zoning Ordinance. A combination of two of more materials is allowed.

(b) The base and structure for permitted signs located outside the Quality Development Corridor (QDC) overlay zoning district shall be composed of brick, stone, masonry-backed stucco, wood or other category A materials as detailed as acceptable in section 246.1.5(1)(a) of the Coweta County Zoning Ordinance. A combination of two or more materials is allowed. In addition, aluminum sheeting shall be a permitted material meeting the following specifications;

(i) The thickness of aluminum shall be a minimum of 0.040 gauge thickness.

(ii) The base shall be a minimum of a four (4) sided construction (front, rear, right and left sides). A top shall be required only if needed to screen any mechanical or structural components on the interior of the sign.

(iii) The base shall be neither weight bearing nor support structure, but only serving as a mechanism to conceal the erection poles, thus completing the monolithic monument requirement.

(iv) The base shall be finished to give the appearance of masonry, textured finish or may be painted in a similar fashion.

(Ord. of 2-19-13)

(c) *Maintenance.*

(1) The area on private property around the sign on which it is erected shall be properly maintained clear of brush, trees, and other obstacles so as to make signs readily visible;

- (2) All burned out bulbs or damaged panels must be replaced;
 - (3) All sign copy shall be maintained securely to the face and all missing copy must be replaced;
 - (4) All signs shall be maintained in good structural condition at all times so that the public and traffic safety are not compromised; and
 - (5) All signs shall present a neat and orderly appearance, without rust or holes on or in the sign or sign structure, or broken, missing, loose or bent parts, faded, or flaking paint, nonoperative or particularly nonoperative illuminating or mechanical devices or missing letters in sign copy.
 - (6) It shall be the responsibility of the sign owner to maintain and ensure compliance with the provisions of this chapter.
- (d) *Measurement of maximum height of signs.* The height of all signs shall be measured from the grade at the right-of-way boundary line or the grade of the sign site if such grade is higher than the grade at the boundary line of the street right-of-way to the uppermost part of the sign face, base or structure. If the sign is located below the grade at the boundary line of the street right-of-way, sign height shall be measured from the edge of the right-of-way to the uppermost part of the sign face, base or structure.
- (e) *Computation of sign area.*
- (1) The area of the sign shall be computed from the algebraic sum of the actual sign configuration, be it square, rectangle, circle, oval or other polygon shape. The area shall be measured from the outer dimensions of the frame, trim or molding by which the sign is enclosed, where they exist, or from the outer edge of the signboard where they do not exist.
 - (2) When a sign consists of individual letters, symbols or characters, its area shall be computed as the area of the smallest rectangle which encloses all the letters, symbols and characters.
- (f) *Minimum sign setbacks.* Except as otherwise specifically provided, for any freestanding signs, the minimum front setback shall be 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right-of-way, whichever is greater, and ten feet from the side and rear lot lines. However, in no case will a sign be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection, or railway crossing.
- (g) *Illumination.*
- (1) *Nonresidential districts.* No sign shall be illuminated by lights that flash, move, change in intensity, or turn on intermittently more than once per day, except as provided herein. To prevent glare visible from a public street or adjoining property, the beam of any light shall be directed so as not to be visible beyond the sign at which it is directed, and the light source shall not be visible from any point on an adjacent property or the public right-of-way. Light from any illuminated sign shall not be of an intensity or brightness which

will interfere with the peace, comfort, convenience, and general welfare of residents or occupants of adjacent properties or vehicular traffic on adjacent roadways.

- (2) *Residential districts.* Signs located in residential districts shall not be illuminated other than signs at the entrance of the subdivision.
- (h) *Movement or animation.* No sign or part of a sign shall rotate, oscillate, or otherwise move or change in appearance more than one time in a 24-hour period, except letters or numbers that are not greater than 12 inches in height and do not have a display area greater than two square feet which may change no more than one time every 15 seconds.
- (i) *Sign message.* In any zoning district, any sign, display, or device allowed under this chapter may contain any lawful noncommercial or commercial message except as expressly provided herein. No provision of this chapter shall be construed to allow regulation of signs based on the content of the sign message.

Sec. 58-7. - Signs requiring a permit.

The following signs are allowed with a permit.

- (a) *Wall signs.* Wall signs shall be permitted on the wall facing a public street unless that building has public street frontage on more than one side, in which case, additional wall signs are allowed on the side facing the street, subject to the following:
 - (1) Wall signs are allowed in all nonresidential zoning districts and in residential zoning districts that are subject to a conditional use permit or that are at least ten acres and have a permitted nonresidential use.
 - (2) If a structure is located on a lot that has no street frontage, wall signs shall be permitted on any single facade.
 - (3) Wall signs attached flat against the exterior surface of a building may extend not more than 24 inches from the wall.
 - (4) For buildings 50,000 square feet or less in size, the total area for wall signage shall not exceed 25 percent of the total area of the one building facade upon which the signage is placed or 200 square feet, whichever is less. For buildings over 50,000 square feet in size, the total area for wall signage shall not exceed 10 percent of the total area of the one building facade upon which the signage is placed or 400 square feet, whichever is less. A sign directory is a wall sign. For buildings with multiple tenants having store fronts only, the facade rented by the tenant shall be considered as wall area for a sign; and tenant spaces of 50,000 square feet or less in size shall be calculated at 25 percent of the total area of the one tenant space on which the signage is placed or 200 square feet,

whichever is less.

- (5) Reserved.
- (6) Wall signs shall not extend above the eave line or top of a parapet on the wall to which it is attached.

(Ord. of 2-19-13)

- (b) *Canopy signs.* In nonresidential districts only, one canopy sign may cover 25 percent of a canopy but shall not exceed a length of 20 feet and a maximum area of 40 square feet and shall be at least 8 feet above the lowest ground elevation.
- (c) *Banners.* Banners shall be permitted only by the issuance of a permit under the following conditions:
 - (1) Banners are allowed in nonresidential zoning districts, residential zoning districts that are subject to a conditional use permit, and residentially zoned parcels that combine to create a single nonresidential use on at least ten acres.
 - (2) One banner may be erected for no more than 30 days.
 - (3) The maximum size of the banner shall not exceed 35 square feet and the height shall not exceed five feet.
 - (4) Only one banner will be permitted for particular lot during a 90-day period.
 - (5) The minimum front setback shall be 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right-of-way, whichever is greater and ten feet from the side and rear lot lines. However, in no case will a banner be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection, or railway crossing. For traffic safety, signs shall not be located within the triangular area on a corner lot formed by measuring 20 feet along both street side property lines from their intersection.
- (d) *Projecting signs.* One projecting nonilluminated sign per door entrance used shall be allowed, provided the following:
 - (1) Projecting signs are allowed in all nonresidential zoning districts.
 - (2) The sign is no more than three square feet in area;
 - (3) Is uniform in size, material, color and shape and is placed in an equivalent location to other such signs located on the same building;
 - (4) Is suspended from the eave or soffit of the building or extends from the wall; and
 - (5) Maintains a minimum of eight feet clearance between the bottom of the sign and the walkway below;
 - (6) Shall not extend vertically beyond the window sill of the second story.

- (e) *Menu boards.* Restaurant menu boards are allowed subject to the following regulations:
- (1) Menu boards are allowed in all nonresidential zoning districts.
 - (2) No more than 35 square feet in area.
 - (3) No more than five feet in height.
 - (4) No part of the sign shall be legible by the traveling public.
- (f) *Residential subdivision entrance.* No more than two freestanding monument signs or two suspended signs attached to a wall or column shall be allowed to be placed on residentially zoned property subject to the following:
1. The sign face for a monument sign shall not exceed 40 square feet in area and ten feet in height. The sign face for the suspended sign shall not exceed 16 square feet in area and ten feet in height. Such signs shall be secured to a support structure to prevent the sign(s) from becoming airborne.
 2. If the sign structure is attached to a decorative wall or fence, the decorative wall or fence shall not exceed eight feet in height. The post and/or columns of the decorative wall or fence shall not exceed ten feet in height.
 3. Such signs shall not be internally illuminated.
 4. The permit shall not be issued until after the final plat is recorded.
 5. The minimum front setback shall be 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right-of-way, whichever is greater and ten feet from the side and rear lot lines. However, in no case will a sign be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection, or railway crossing. For traffic safety, signs shall not be located within the triangular area on a corner lot formed by measuring 20 feet along both street side property lines from their intersection.
- (g) *Signage during construction.* Four additional signs shall be allowed during construction of a residential or nonresidential subdivision. The sign shall not be internally illuminated.
- (1) *Duration.* The sign shall be allowed beginning with the issuance of a land disturbance permit and ending with the issuance of a certificate of occupancy or installation of a permanent sign at the subdivision entrance, whichever comes first.
 - (2) *Size.* The sign shall not exceed 16 square feet in area and 86 feet in height.
 - (3) *Location* The minimum front setback shall be 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right-of-way, whichever is greater and ten feet from the side and rear lot lines. However, in no case will a sign be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection,

or railway crossing. For traffic safety, signs shall not be located within the triangular area on a corner lot formed by measuring 20 feet along both street side property lines from their intersection.

(h) *Monument signs.* The owner of property or the owner's agent may apply for a permit for monument signs subject to the following:

- (1) Signs permitted by this section are allowed only in nonresidential zoning districts, residential zoning districts that are subject to a conditional use permit, and residentially zoned parcels that combine to create a single nonresidential use on at least ten acres.
- (2) The maximum sign area of the sign shall be 100 square feet for multiple user lots and 60 square feet for single user lots. Maximum sign areas shall apply to each face separately, but no freestanding sign shall have more than two faces. Where two sign faces are located in a "V" formation, the angle between the two sign faces shall not be greater than 60 degrees.
- (3) The maximum height of the sign is eight feet.
- (4) The minimum front setback shall be 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right-of-way, whichever is greater and ten feet from the side and rear lot lines. However, in no case will a sign be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection, or railway crossing. For traffic safety, signs shall not be located within the triangular area on a corner lot formed by measuring 20 feet along both street side property lines from their intersection.
- (5) One monument sign is permitted for each street on which the parcel has at least 50 feet of road frontage.
- (6) Lots that contain an interstate sign shall not be allowed to place a monument sign on the lot.
- (7) Monument sign design.

Type A: A permanent ground sign designed so the base of the sign face is flush with the supporting base, and the supporting base is flush with the ground and extends the full width of the sign face provided the sign face does not project more than 12 inches from the monument face and the sign base does not extend greater than 24 inches from all sides of the sign face or structure.

Type B: A sign that is attached to a monument face provided the sign face does not project more than 12 inches from the monument face and the sign base does not extend greater than 24 inches from all sides of the sign face or structure.

- (i) *Interstate sign.* One interstate sign per quadrant location, as defined below, of any interchange adjacent to the interstate highway is permitted under the following conditions:
- (1) The sign must be located within 600 feet of the right-of-way of Interstate 85.
 - (2) The signs must be located within 600 feet of an ongoing commercial or industrial activity.
 - (3) The parcel upon which the sign is located must be zoned for nonresidential use.
 - (4) The signs are restricted to the quadrant area of 1,200 feet long beginning 500 feet from the point where the pavement widens on the main travel way to accommodate the longest entrance or exit ramp.
 - (5) The sign may be a maximum size of 600 square feet inclusive of any border and trim, but excluding the base apron, supports, and other structural members. A uniform size requirement of 12 feet in height by 50 feet of length shall be strictly adhered to.
 - (6) The maximum sign height is 50 feet.
 - (7) The sign must be located on a parcel of at least one acre.
 - (8) The sign must be located on a parcel that allows for a clear fall zone such that no building or other structure shall be located within the fall zone.
 - (9) The signs allowed by this section may be pole signs.
 - (10) Lots that contain a monument sign shall not be allowed to place an interstate sign on the lot.
 - (11) The minimum front setback shall be 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right-of-way, whichever is greater and 10 feet from the side and rear lot lines. However, in no case will a sign be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection, or railway crossing. For traffic safety, signs shall not be located within the triangular area on a corner lot formed by measuring 20 feet along both street side property lines from their intersection.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07; Ord. No. 011-08, 4-17-08; Ord. No. 026-08, 8-19-08; Ord. No. 024-11, 10-18-11)

Sec. 58-8. - Master sign plans.

- (a) *Approval required.* Any new construction or redevelopment nonresidential project including more than one freestanding building shall obtain approval of a master sign plan from the planning department as part of the development review process prior to any signs being erected other than signs permitted during construction. All signs erected or maintained shall conform at all times to the approved master sign plan.

The signs approved through the master sign plan are the only signs allowed; any deviations from an approved master sign plan shall be unlawful unless and until a revised master sign plan is approved.

- (b) *Master sign plan application.* An application for a master sign plan shall include the following information:
- (1) Accurate site plan, including location of buildings, parking lots, driveways, and landscaped areas;
 - (2) One set of drawings showing details of a construction and foundation of proposed signs;
 - (3) An accurate indication of the location of each present and proposed future signs of any type, whether requiring a permit or not;
 - (4) An elevation drawing or photo depicting the proposed location of signs on buildings, walls or windows;
 - (5) A scaled drawing showing the size, shape, design, colors, materials, lighting and letter styles of proposed signs;
 - (6) Computation of the maximum total sign area. For buildings with two or more separate businesses, computations shall identify the total maximum area each individual business will be allowed;
 - (7) Plans, including window signage should indicate the areas of the windows to be covered;
 - (8) Master sign plans must be signed by all owners or their authorized agents;
 - (9) Any other maps, drawings, or materials as required by the planning department to adequately describe the sign proposal.
- (c) *Master sign plan review.* An application for a master sign plan shall be reviewed as part of the development review process.
- (d) *Individual sign permits.* Individual sign permits are required for all signs contained within an approved master sign plan.
- (e) *Amendments.* A master sign plan may be amended by filing a new master sign plan application that conforms with all requirements in this section.
- (f) *Maximum number of signs.*
- (1) *One main entrance monument sign.* The maximum sign area shall be 100 square feet with a maximum height of eight feet.
 - (2) *Secondary entrance signs.* Each additional entrance, may have a sign not greater than 60 square feet with a maximum height of eight feet, provided that the secondary entrance sign is at least 500 feet from any other sign.
 - (3) *Internal signs.* One sign shall be allowed at each intersection of internal streets. The signs shall not exceed ten square feet in area and three feet in height.
 - (4) *[Monument signs.]* One monument sign is permitted for each separate building which is identified on the approved site plan.

- a. The maximum sign area of the sign shall be 100 square feet for multiple user lots and 60 square feet for single user lots. Maximum sign areas shall apply to each face separately, but no freestanding sign shall have more than two faces. Where two sign faces are located in a "V" formation, the angle between the two sign faces shall not be greater than 60 degrees.
 - b. The maximum height of the sign is eight feet.
- (5) *Wall signs.* Wall signs shall be permitted on the wall facing an internal street subject to the following:
 - a. Wall signs attached flat against the exterior surface of a building may extend not more than 24 inches from the wall.
 - b. The total area for wall signage shall not exceed 25 percent of the total area of the one building facade upon which the signage is placed or 100 square feet, whichever is less. A sign directory is a wall sign.
 - c. Reserved.
 - d. Wall signs shall not extend above the eave line or top of a parapet on the wall to which it is attached.
- (g) *Location of entrance sign.* The minimum front setback shall be 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right of way, whichever is greater and ten feet from the side and rear lot lines. However, in no case will a sign be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection, or railway crossing. For traffic safety, signs shall not be located within the triangular area on a corner lot formed by measuring 20 feet along both street side property lines from their intersection.
- (h) *Significant development exceptions.* An exception for the size, height, and number of signs may be granted by the board of commissioners under the master sign plan for significant developments which meet at a minimum all criteria set forth below:
 - (1) The development campus is located on a single tract, parcel, or lot.
 - (2) The tract size is a minimum of 100 acres.
 - (3) The campus is comprised of at least three buildings, at least one of which buildings must be greater than four stories and a minimum of 60 feet in height.
 - (4) The campus development requires 2,000 or more parking spaces.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07; Ord. No. 011-08, 4-17-08; Ord. NO. 026-08, 8-19-08)

Sec. 58-9. - Weekend signs.

- (a) *Findings and purpose.* Many people travel to, from and through the county on a daily basis. During the weekday rush hours when the majority of people on the roads are commuting to or from work, roads are often nearly beyond their capacity. Traffic hazards and distractions must be minimized. People at times, however, need the benefit of signs to help them find their destinations. Properly regulated, such signs

may actually aid the flow of traffic. The following regulations recognize the difference in weekday and weekend traffic and are intended to promote and protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents, visitors and businesses of the county.

- (b) *Definition.* "Weekend signs" are signs erected between the hours of noon on Friday until midnight on Sunday.
- (c) *[Where allowed.]* A general permit is hereby granted for the weekend signs in any zoning district.
- (d) *[Regulations.]* Weekend signs are subject to the following regulations:
 - (1) No more than one weekend sign per lot, per road frontage.
 - (2) Weekend signs must be at least 50 feet apart.
 - (3) Weekend signs shall not exceed six square feet of sign area and three feet in height and may be double-faced.
 - (4) Weekend signs shall be at least 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right-of-way, whichever is greater; and shall be at least ten feet from side and rear property lines. Determination of the right-of-way can be made by contacting the public works department.
 - (5) All weekend signs must be placed on private property and may not be placed upon the right-of-way.
 - (6) Sign owner shall have written permission from the property owner authorizing the display of the weekend sign and shall produce the written permission at the request of a county agent.
 - (7) Each weekend sign shall be legibly marked with the name of the owner. If a party other than the owner agrees to be responsible for the removal of the sign, then the responsible party's name may be substituted. This information must be written in weatherproof ink or paint upon at least one face of the weekend sign and in letters of at least one inch in height. The weekend sign is subject to being removed if it is not marked with the name specified herein.
 - (8) Weekend signs shall not be affixed in any manner to trees, natural objects, streetlight poles, utility poles, other signs or other sign structures.
- (e) *[Removal.]* It shall be the responsibility of the sign owner to remove all weekend signs prior to midnight Sunday.
- (f) *Enforcement.* In addition to the penalties set forth in [section 58-15](#) of this chapter, the owner of the weekend sign or the owner of the product being advertised on the weekend sign, if that is the purpose of the sign, may be fined \$1,000.00 for each sign displayed after midnight on Sunday.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-10. - Signs subject to a general permit.

A general permit is hereby granted for the following types of signs in any zoning district other than lots covered by a master sign plan, provided that such signs are erected and maintained in compliance with all applicable conditions:

- (a) Traffic control signs;
- (b) Official notices issued by any court with competent jurisdiction or authorized public agency, department or official;
- (c) Any flag provided that:
 - (1) No more than one flagpole is permitted per lot;
 - (2) No more than two flags are permitted per flagpole;
 - (3) The maximum dimension of the hoist side of each flag shall not exceed 20 percent of the height of the flagpole;
 - (4) All flagpoles shall be set back from each property boundary a distance equal to the height of the flagpole or 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right-of-way, whichever is greater and ten feet from the side and rear lot lines, whichever is greater. However, in no case will a flag be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection, or railway crossing. For traffic safety, flags shall not be located within the triangular area on a corner lot formed by measuring 20 feet along both street side property lines from their intersection.
 - (5) All flagpoles shall be maintained in good repair, so as not to constitute a threat to public safety;
 - (6) On officially designated county, state, and federal holidays, there shall be no maximum flag size or number of flags on display in residential districts.
 - (7) In nonresidential districts, flagpoles shall not exceed the allowed height provided for a structure or building in the applicable zoning district, or 50 feet, whichever is less. Flagpoles in residential districts shall not exceed 25 feet in height or the height of the primary structure on the lot, whichever is less.
- (d) In addition to any other sign permitted by this chapter, the following is allowed on a single lot:
 - (1) Temporary signs with the following size and height restrictions:
 - a. For residential lots less than two and one-half acres, a maximum size of six square feet of sign area, with a cumulative square footage of 12 square feet. Maximum height of any sign is three feet to the top of the sign.
 - b. For residential lots two and one-half acres or more, a maximum size of 16 square feet of sign area, with a

cumulative square footage of 16 square feet. The maximum height of any sign is five feet to the top of the sign.

c. For all nonresidential lots, signs shall be a maximum size of 16 square feet of sign area, with a cumulative square footage of 16 square feet. The maximum height of any sign is five feet to the top of the sign.

- (2) Reserved.
- (3) All signs shall have a minimum setback of ten feet rear and side from side property lines. For front setback, the sign must be 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right-of-way, whichever is greater. However, in no case will a sign be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection, or railway crossing. For traffic safety, signs shall not be located within the triangular area on a corner lot formed by measuring 20 feet along both street side property lines from their intersection.
- (4) These signs are not limited in design to monument signs.
- (5) These signs are limited to a display of noncommercial speech or commercial speech that pertains to a commercial enterprise located on the property, such as a for sale sign, a sign reflecting the property's home occupation, or a yard sale sign.

In the event that a court should adjudge any part of this section of the ordinance a violation of the Georgia or United States Constitutions or any other provision of law, it is the specific intent of the Coweta County Board of Commissioners that this provision referencing a limitation to noncommercial speech or commercial speech that pertains to a commercial enterprise located on the property be omitted from the ordinance and the remainder of the ordinance stay in effect to regulate signs on property within the County. This severance section is in addition to the legislative intent expressed in [section 58-15](#) of this chapter.

- (e) *Window signs.*
 - (1) In all zoning districts.
 - (2) No more than 25 percent or 16 square feet, which ever is less, of the total available glass area shall be used to display window signs.
 - (3) No window signs are allowed above the first floor unless the building is a multitenant office or commercial structure wherein tenants have primary direct access from their space to the outside. The access must include outside walkways and stairways properly designated for public use.

- (4) In no case shall any window signs be installed above the level of the second floor windows.
- (f) Out-of-store marketing devices in nonresidential districts. The minimum front setback shall be 15 feet from the edge of the pavement or outside of the right of way, whichever is greater and ten feet from the side and rear lot lines. However, in no case will an out-of-store marketing device be allowed to obscure vision at a street or driveway intersection, or railway crossing. For traffic safety, out-of-store marketing devices shall not be located within the triangular area on a corner lot formed by measuring 20 feet along both street side property lines from their intersection.
- (g) Numerals displayed for the purpose of identifying property location affixed to a structure such as a mailbox or house, or placed on the ground, not to exceed eight inches in height.
- (h) Door signs not to exceed one square foot and not more than one sign per door.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-11. - Prohibited signs.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this ordinance, the following types of signs shall be prohibited anywhere in the unincorporated areas of Coweta County.

- (a) *Signs imitating warning signals.* No sign shall display intermittent lights resembling the flashing lights customarily used in traffic signals or in police, fire, ambulance or rescue vehicles, nor shall any sign use the words "stop," "danger," or any other word, phrase, symbol or character in a manner that might mislead or confuse an automobile or other vehicular driver.
- (b) *Signs within street or highway right-of-way.* No sign whatsoever, whether temporary or permanent, except traffic control signs and signals and information signs erected by an authorized public agency or department, are permitted within any street or highway right-of-way and must be ten feet from the edge of the pavement or outside the right-of-way, whichever is greater.
- (c) *Obstructive signs.* No sign shall be at any location where, by reason of position, shape, wording or color, it obstructs the view of pedestrians or vehicular traffic.
- (d) *Certain attached and painted signs.* Signs painted on or attached to trees, fence posts and telephone or other utility poles or signs painted on or attached to rocks or other natural features or painted on the roofs shall be prohibited.

- (e) *Fluttering ribbons, balloons and banners.* Fluttering ribbons, banners, balloons or other inflated figures or objects and similar devices are prohibited. This restriction shall not apply to flags.
- (f) *Roof signs.* No sign shall be permitted that is mounted on or extends into the air above any roof surface of a building. A sign may be mounted against a parapet of uniform height around the perimeter of a building but may not extend above the parapet.
- (g) *Portable signs.* No portable sign shall be permitted.
- (h) *Painted wall murals.* No painted mural shall be permitted unless it complies with the height and size restrictions contained in this chapter.
- (i) *Obscene signs.* Signs or other advertising structures that contain obscene material are prohibited.
- (j) *Searchlights.* No searchlights or similar devices.
- (k) *Benches, trash receptacles.* Signs on benches or trash receptacles are prohibited.
- (l) *Audible signs.* Audible signs are prohibited.
- (m) *[Other signs.]* A-frame, sandwich type, sidewalk, curb signs, or any signs held by individuals are prohibited.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-12. - Sign permits.

- (a) *Purpose.* The purpose of this section is to provide a timely and standardized mechanism for reviewing applications for sign permits to ensure signs within the county comply with the objective standards of this chapter, including, but not limited to, the height and size provisions.
- (b) *Authority.* The planning department is authorized to review and approve or disapprove an application for a sign permit pursuant to the procedures of this section and the standards of this chapter.
- (c) *Applicability.* No sign, except those specified in sections 58-8 and 58-9 of this chapter, shall be erected, placed, reconstructed or structurally altered without the sign owner having first obtained a sign permit from the building department after approval from the planning department pursuant to the procedures in this section and the standards of this chapter.
- (d) *Permitted signs by ordinance.* Pursuant to sections 58-9 and 58-10 of this chapter, a general permit has been granted for those signs listed therein, and no application for a sign permit is required so long as all applicable standards of this chapter are met.
- (e) *Procedure.* The following procedure shall govern the application for, and the issuance of, all sign permits under this chapter.
 - (1) *Initial submission and review of application.* Application for a sign permit shall be made on the form provided by the planning department and shall be

accompanied by the information and documents listed on the form and the fee as required by the county. An application will only be deemed as complete when all required information and accompanying documents are received. The following information will be required at a minimum:

- a. Name, address and telephone number of the party erecting the sign and of the sign owner.
- b. The value of the sign.
- c. A survey to scale showing the street address of the property upon which the subject sign is to be located, the proposed location of subject sign on the property, the distance of the proposed sign from the property's boundaries, and all existing structures or buildings on the property.
- d. The square foot area per sign and the aggregate square foot area if there is more than one sign face.
- e. The names(s) and address(es) of the owner(s) of the real property upon which the sign is to be located.
- f. Written consent of the owner of the property, or his/her agent, granting permission for the placement, maintenance, size and height of the sign to be placed on the property.
- g. For wall signs: a set of building elevations.
- h. Prints or drawings of the plans and specifications for the proposed sign, together with structural details for construction and attachment to a building or placement in the ground. A single submission may be permitted for standardized signs.
- i. Any electrical permit required and issued for such sign.
- j. Any currently issued, valid contractor or subcontractor license for sign installer.

(f) *Action by the planning department.* Within ten working days after the application is determined complete, the planning department shall review the application in accordance with this section and determine whether the application complies with the standards in this chapter.

- (1) *Approval.* If the planning department finds that the application complies with the standards of this chapter, the planning department will forward the application to the building department for issuance of the sign permit. Sign application for which no action has been taken after 21 working days after the application is complete shall be deemed approved.
- (2) *Fails to comply.* If the planning department determines the application fails to comply with the standards of this chapter, the applicant shall be provided a written notification. If the applicant resubmits the application within 30 days of the written notification of denial, the resubmitted application does not require

payment of the fee. The time for resubmission may be extended an additional 30 days for good cause, if requested of the planning department prior to the original deadline for resubmittal.

- (3) *Resubmittal.* A revised application shall be resubmitted to the planning department and reviewed and acted upon within ten working days after its resubmittal. The planning department shall approve or disapprove the application, based on the criteria in this chapter.
- (4) *Criteria.* A sign permit shall be approved upon a finding that the applicant has demonstrated that the application complies with the objective standards of this chapter.
- (5) *Expiration.* A sign permit shall become null and void if the sign for which the permit was issued has not been installed and completed within 30 days after the date of issuance; provided, however, that when an applicant can demonstrate that a commercial entity was timely engaged to construct the permitted sign, but the fabrication has not yet been completed, one 30-day extension may be granted by the planning department. No refunds will be made for permit fees paid for permits that expired due to failure to erect a permitted sign. If later an individual desires to erect a sign at the same location, a new application must be submitted and another fee paid in accordance with the fee schedule applicable at such time.
- (g) *Amendments.* A sign permit may be amended, extended, or modified only in accordance with the procedures established for its original approval.
- (h) *Maintenance of permit.* The owner or lessee of a lot containing signs requiring a \ permit under this chapter shall, at all times, maintain in force a sign permit for such property. Sign permits shall be issued for individual lots.
- (i) *Identification labels.* With each permit the county shall issue a sticker bearing the same number as the permit with which it is issued. It shall be the duty of the permittee or his agent to affix such sticker to the sign in the lower right hand area so it will be easily seen. The absence of a proper sticker shall be prima facie evidence that the sign has been, or is being, erected or operated in violation of the provisions of this chapter. Stickers may be color-coded.
- (j) *Assignment of sign permits.* A current or valid sign permit shall be freely assigned or transferred to a successor as owner or lessee of the property or holder of a business license for the same premises, subject only to filing such application as the county may require and paying any applicable fees. The assignment shall be accomplished by filing and shall not require approval. This section is limited by [section 58-13](#) regarding nonconforming signs.
- (k) *Vested rights.* No person applying for a sign permit or erecting a sign under this chapter shall acquire any vested rights to continue maintenance of such signs.

- (l) *Appeals.* The following procedure shall govern the appeal of any decision to deny an application for a sign permit under this chapter:
- (1) Any applicant or person aggrieved or affected by the denial or grant of an application for a sign permit may appeal the determination to the board of commissioners by filing a written notice of appeal with the planning department within 30 days following the decision. The appeal shall be heard within 30 working days of the filing of the written notice of appeal.
 - (2) The board of commissioners shall have 30 days following the hearing to issue a written decision.
 - (3) Any party aggrieved or affected by the decision of the board of commissioners may appeal the decision by filing a writ of certiorari with the superior court pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 5-4-1, et seq.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-13. - Nonconforming signs.

- (a) *Findings.* The county finds that nonconforming signs may adversely affect the public health, safety and welfare. Such signs may adversely affect the aesthetic characteristics of the county and may adversely affect public safety due to the visual impact of said signs on motorists and pedestrians.
- (b) *Nonconforming Signs.* A nonconforming sign that is permanently affixed to the ground or to a building may continue to be used, except that the nonconforming sign:
 - (1) Shall not be enlarged or altered except in conformance with this chapter, but it may be repaired to the extent necessary to maintain it in a safe condition;
 - (2) Shall not be replaced, expanded or modified by another nonconforming sign, except that the substitution or interchange of poster panels, painted boards or dismountable material on nonconforming signs shall be permitted;
 - (3) Shall not be allowed to be increased in height or size or relocated on the property, but may be decreased in height or size;
 - (4) Is subject to removal if:
 - a. It has deteriorated to a point of making it a hazard, or unsightly; or
 - b. The sign has been damaged to such extent that more than minor repairs are required to restore the sign;
 - (5) Shall be removed if the use of the nonconforming sign, or the property on which it is located, has ceased, become vacant, or been unoccupied for a period of 180 consecutive days or more. An intent to abandon is not required as the basis for removal under this subsection; or
 - (6) Shall be removed if there is a change in use of the premises on which the nonconforming sign is located.
 - (7) To the extent this section conflicts with O.C.G.A. § 32-6-83 or Ga. Const. Art. 3 §6, ¶ 4(a) in application, this section shall be deemed to provide affected

parties the minimum protections provided by O.C.G.A. § 32-6-83 or Ga. Const. Art. 3 §6, ¶ 4(a) as amended from time to time. In no event is it the county's intent to obligate itself to pay any compensation related to the removal of any sign.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-14. - Variance.

When a literal application of this chapter, due to special circumstances, would result in an unusual and extraordinary hardship in an individual case, a variance may be granted by the board of commissioners.

- (a) *Authority to grant variances.* The board of commissioners is authorized to receive, consider, grant, grant with conditions, or deny applications for variances, provided, however, that with respect to height and size of a sign, the board of commissioners is only authorized to increase the height or size of a sign by a maximum of 25% of the standards set forth in this sign ordinance.
- (b) *Variance application.* A request for a variance may be initiated by a property owner or his/her authorized agent by filing an application with the planning department. The application shall be accompanied by a site plan, drawn to scale, showing the dimensions and position of the proposed sign in relationship to the surrounding properties. The planning department may require other drawings or materials essential to an understanding of the proposed sign and variance requested and its relationship to the surrounding properties. The planning department is entitled to reject any variance application that does not include the information requested herein or that requests a variance to increase the size or height of the sign, except as provided elsewhere in this chapter.
- (c) *Fee.* Each application for a variance shall be accompanied by the applicable fee, which shall be established by the county.
- (d) *Conditions and criteria for granting variances.* The board of commissioners, in cases where specifically authorized, may grant a variance only after consideration and adoption of findings of fact that all of the following conditions and criteria have been met:
 - (1) There exist extraordinary and exceptional conditions pertaining to the property in question resulting from its size, shape, or topography that are not applicable to other lands or structures in the area;
 - (2) A literal interpretation of the provisions of the sign ordinance would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other similar properties;
 - (3) Granting a variance requested would not confer upon the property of the applicant any significant privileges that are denied to other similar properties;
 - (4) The requested variance will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of these regulations and will not be injurious to the neighborhood or to the general welfare;

- (5) The special circumstances are not the result of actions of the applicant;
 - (6) The mere existence of a nonconforming sign or advertising device shall not constitute a valid reason to grant a variance;
 - (7) Granting the variance would not result in allowing a sign that interferes with road or highway visibility or obstruct or otherwise interfere with the safe and orderly movement of traffic; and
 - (8) The variance requested is the minimum variance, which will make possible the logical use of the land and sign.
- (e) *Appeals.* Any party aggrieved or affected by the decision of the board of commissioners may appeal the decision by filing a writ of certiorari with the superior court pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 5-4-1, et seq.

(Ord. of 2-19-13)

Sec. 58-15. - Enforcement.

- (a) *Enforcement officer.* The provisions of this chapter shall be enforced by code enforcement.
- (b) *Penalties.* A violation of this chapter shall result in the sign permit being revoked. Additionally, any person violating this chapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction, shall be punished as provided in [section 1-15](#) of the Coweta County Code of Ordinances. If found guilty, a person violating this chapter may be fined up to \$1,000.00 for each violation.
- (c) *Public nuisance.* Any violation of this chapter is hereby declared to be a public nuisance.
- (d) *Notice.* Code enforcement shall give the sign permittee ten to 30 days' written notice, based on the practical considerations of completing measures to comport with the standards of this chapter, to correct the deficiencies or to remove the sign(s) which is in violation of this chapter. If the permittee refuses to correct the deficiencies or remove the sign, the county may have the sign removed at the expense of the permittee.
- (e) *Removal.*
 - (1) The county may order the removal of any sign in violation of this chapter by written notice to the permit holder; or if there is no permit holder, then to the owner of the sign; or if the sign owner cannot be found or cannot be determined, then to the sign erector and any party that procured the erection of the sign. If a permit has been issued, such notice shall operate to revoke the permit.
 - (2) If the sign is not removed within the time required by the county (or the date any appeal becomes final), the county shall remove or cause to be removed the sign and collect the costs thereof.

- (3) The county shall have removed any sign in violation of this chapter, without giving notice to any party if: the sign is upon the public right-of-way or upon other public property or if the sign poses an immediate safety threat to the life or health of any member of the public.
- (4) Signs removed by the county will be destroyed after 14 days if they are not claimed.
- (f) *Appeal.* Any violator may appeal the determination of code enforcement to the board of commissioners in accordance with the procedures of subsection 58-12(l) of this chapter except an appeal must be filed within the time allowed by code enforcement for action on the part of the permit holder, sign owner, or sign erector. Any appeal shall act as a supersedeas of the county's enforcement of this chapter, except to the extent that violation of this chapter is deemed to present a safety hazard to the public.
- (g) *Legal proceedings.* The county, upon a finding that any provision of this chapter is being violated, is authorized to institute legal proceedings to enjoin violations of this chapter. The violator shall be liable for court costs and reasonable attorney fees incurred by the county.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)

Sec. 58-16. - Severability and conflict.

- (a) *Severability.* This chapter is declared to be severable. In the event any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this chapter shall be declared or adjudged invalid or unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, such adjudication shall in no manner affect the other sections, subsections, sentences, clauses or phrases of this chapter, which shall remain of full force and effect, as if the section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase so declared or adjudged invalid or unconstitutional were not originally a part hereof. The county hereby declares that it would have passed the remaining parts of this chapter if it had known that such part or parts hereof would be declared or adjudged invalid or unconstitutional.
- (b) *Conflict.* If any part of this chapter is found to be in conflict with any other ordinance of this county or any state or federal statute, the most restrictive or highest standard shall prevail. If any part of this sign ordinance is explicitly prohibited by state or federal statute, that part shall not be enforced.

(Ord. No. 038-07, 11-15-07)