



## *the* **Prospect Business Association**

### **Sign Regulations in Prospect**

**Purpose:** The Prospect Business Association has a unique access to some business owners in Town. As such we have discussed, internally, how the current Town of Prospect Signage Regulations help/hurt our Town businesses.

The Town of Prospect has a very detailed set of sign regulations for Businesses in (B) Zone, IND-1/2 as well as Residential Zones. And, like in many towns, the sign regulations can be contentious among its residents, business owners and Town Officials. This seems to always happen, but does it need to be so uncomfortable, we ask?

**Discussion:**

It is clear to us that the Town's three-pronged rationale; 1) promote the public safety, 2) protect property values and 3) create an attractive business climate while enhancing the physical appearance of the community **is laudable and appropriate**. We will, however, make a few recommendations that follow rationale 1-3 above, yet provide much better **business opportunities** for the Business Owners of Prospect.

[Note that we have reviewed the "extremely detailed, sign usage policy of the Town of Cheshire, as a nearby comparison.]

Many businesses in Prospect require drive-by traffic to, in fact, survive as businesses. [Other businesses could thrive without ever having a "customer" stop in.] Those that do require traffic need; 1) to **be found** by those specifically looking for their place of business while driving safely down our streets, and 2) to **be noticed** by those driving-by who did not know the business even existed in

Prospect. If any part of the Town's sign usage policy unnecessarily or inconsistently restricts businesses from being **Found** or **Noticed**, we believe a second look at the policy should be in order. Importantly, viewing businesses as being cut exactly from the same cloth (whether they are located in a single, one tenant building, or a large commercial complex with upwards of 20 individual businesses) is a great place to begin.

We sincerely believe that a different way of looking at our Town's businesses; companies that pay us taxes, employ our citizenry, supply our commercial needs locally and save us on transportation costs to acquire these same goods or services at communities farther away from Prospect, may be in order. We propose looking at Businesses as "individuals" rather than simply a "tenant" or "proprietor" at a business location. What we mean is that the current regulations are based upon the Building Lot, as described in 8.6.2 (Definitions). It effectively treats a single small one-business-building the SAME as a multi-business commercial complex with respect to signage allowed on said property (called a Building Lot), regardless of lot/building(s) respective sizes.

Instead, and within reason, each business should be able to have a "minimum useful sign size" on the "Sign for their Business Property". **Treat all businesses equally** could be the new mantra. An example: if, in a business complex with 8 individual businesses, the current Total Maximum Sign Size of **24 square feet** is utilized, each business could use 3 square feet, or a sign **1 foot high by 3 feet long**, visible while not being so large as to be overbearing. The current sign regulations permit such a sign.

Yet in a large business complex with 24 business tenants, each tenant would only be allowed **one square foot** (12 inches by 12 inches), not big enough to even be seen safely from the road; yet is that Business not as valuable to our Town and our Residents as the other "3 square Foot" businesses? In this scenario it seems as businesses in the larger business complexes are hurt by the current sign policies, when, it could be argued, that these larger businesses complexes are safer for traffic (one access & egress for 24 businesses rather than 24 such

individual driveways); safer off-street parking is provided and required at these larger business complexes, less gas is used to drive to one location rather than 24 locations, etc. These are some of the reasons malls came into vogue in the first place, not that we are proposing a mall, it is just a fine lesson.

We believe Section 8.4.1.1 could be modified to allow a “minimum sign size per business” such as 3 square feet so that we are; 1) treating all businesses fairly, 2) making it easier for drivers to actually see what businesses are where and 3) promoting the public safety while protecting property values.

### **Neighboring Town Regulations:**

In reviewing the sign policy of our neighbor, **Cheshire**, we notice that they do not have the “minimum sign size” we are suggesting, BUT they do:

- Allow significantly larger signs per property (**32-48** sq. ft.)
- Determine additional signage allowances based upon the size of the property (> 40,000 sq. ft. is a special rule, so is > 4 acres).
- Even allow more sign space if a property follows specific signage rules (25% increase allowed if the Coordinated Signage Plan 34.15 is followed). This plan, over time as signs need to be replaced by their owners, incentivizes Property Owners into utilizing a consistent, classy, pride-in-the-town-inspiring look that all the townspeople can get behind. In a few years the Town will begin to appear to have a planned approach to the old, contentious, sign problem.
- Have special rules for Route 10, 68, 70 properties, others for I-84 & I-691.

See Cheshire sign policies: 34.1 – 34.22, specifically; 34.8, 34.9, 34.12, & 34.15

**Possible Town Action Items:**

- 1) Is the 24 sq. ft. per Building Lot too small? Should this be increased, across the board, to 32 sq. ft., 40 sq. ft.?**
- 2) Should a Larger Business property (1-2 acres of multiple buildings vs. one small garage) be allowed either more sign sq. ft. OR more signs upon which to list the larger number of business tenants?**
- 3) Should there be different sign size/location rules for State Roads (larger roads, like Routes 68 & 69) vs. other (smaller) Town roads?**
- 4) Should the Town impart a Sign Fairness Rule that stipulates a “minimum” sized sign for each business? (While understanding that a business who is a sole tenant can utilize the entire 24 sq. ft. (or 32 or 40) for their own business. That is how the chips fall. But a minimum sized sign will help businesses in larger Business Parks be seen.**
- 5) Should a “Coordinated Signage Plan”, like Cheshire’s, be adopted by the Town? Incentives like this that make the Town’s roadsides look classier, while answering the needs of our businesses, can be a smart choice for the Future.**

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