

# Staff Report

Presented By: Josh Planz, Chief Building Official

Meeting Date: April 14, 2025

Subject: New Sign Bylaw

Attachment(s): Photos of Current Signs  
History of Sign Variances

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## **Recommendation**

That Council adopt By-law 32-2025, a By-law Regulating Signs in the Municipality.

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## **Report Summary**

On January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 a Draft Sign By-law was brought forward to Council for review. The By-law incorporates comments that were discussed on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and subsequent analysis and review. The By-law is included in the By-law section of the Agenda.

## **Background/Analysis**

On January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Council received an information report with the proposed draft Sign By-law. Comments were received from Council regarding the proposed by-law and they have been incorporated into the new draft by-law.

Below is a summary of the changes to the by-law following Council's comments:

- 1) A definition for Municipal Law Enforcement Officer was added in response to a comment that By-law Officer should be defined. This terminology was used in the by-law, therefore the definition is for Municipal Law Enforcement Officer.
- 2) Poster and signs are restricted from utility poles - This clause was in the by-law but not very clear. This new clause was added to make the restriction easier to understand.
- 3) Accessory signs where restricted in downtown (Clause 7(f)). This section was cleaned up to allow for accessory signs such as A-frame signs to be placed in front of downtown businesses. There are still regulations restricting the blocking of sidewalks and encroaching the travelled areas of the road.
- 4) Profanity Clause – There was discussion regarding the enforceability of a profanity clause. The Town does have an opinion regarding a political sign without fully spelling the profanity. The opinion was, in this instance, unenforceable. After discussion, it was

decided to keep the clause in the by-law. There are instances where this should be enforced.

- 5) Ground Signs in Residential Zones – Grounds signs in residential zones was discussed at Council. The comments were reviewed and a balance was sought to address both sides of the issue. For residential houses (R1) zone ground signs are prohibited. Please note that house signs are still allowed. For larger density residential properties and cottage parks, ground signs are allowed as per the regulations.
- 6) Freestanding Sign Height - The existing by-law defined these signs as ground signs and allowed for a maximum height of 2.5 m (8'2"). During the writing of the draft by-law, it was determined that this regulation was not in line with surrounding municipalities and noted that the question of height received the most questions during applications for sign permits. The solution was to create a new sign regulation (Freestanding Sign) for signs in Highway Commercial zones.

Many of the Highway Commercial properties in Town currently have signs that exceed 2.5 m height regulation (see examples in attached Photos of Current Signs; the wood post in the pictures represents the current allowable height). Also attached is a history of sign variances for background.

The proposed height for the new Freestanding signs in Highway Commercial has a graduated height based on the speed limit of the street. A property fronting on a 60km/h street (or slower) is allowed a 3.65m height restriction and an 80km/h street has a 6.0m height restriction.

In terms of process, the new draft Sign By-law was circulated to the Port Elgin and Southampton Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) and the Chamber of Commerce for information and was reviewed by the Committee of Adjustment.

In summary, while the proposed by-law is not a major change from the current by-law, it has a clearer layout making it easier to understand; and cleaned up housekeeping items, including updated terminology, that will make it easier to administer.

## **Linkages**

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 1: Meeting the Needs of a Growing Community
- Business Plan Alignment: Development Services Major Initiative

## **Financial Impacts/Source of Funding**

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

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Reviewed By: Mark Paoli, Director of Development Services

Approved By: Kara Van Myall, Chief Administrative Officer