



# Washoe County COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

December 30, 2013

Dear Political Candidate:

Congratulations on your decision to pursue elected public service. As you conduct your campaign, you may want to erect campaign signs, and this letter is to inform you about provisions in Washoe County's Sign Code that may affect your approach in posting your campaign signs.

As a starting point, you should always obtain a property owner's permission before posting any sign.

Generally, the Washoe County Sign Code regulates the number, size, location and certain characteristics of all signage allowed in unincorporated Washoe County and further requires property owners to obtain permits for many types of signs. There are no special rules regarding political signs. While the following rules apply to all signs, we will discuss them in the context of your campaign signs:

**Temporary Signs:** Property owners may display temporary signs on their property without obtaining permits<sup>1</sup> if:

- (1) the signs are made of paper, cardboard, cloth, plastic or similar material of limited durability;
- (2) the signs are displayed only until the scheduled event it advertises has happened, which in your case would be the primary election and then the general election if you are selected in the primary. ;
- (3) no sign is more than 128 square feet in size, or more than 8 feet high,
- (4) the aggregate sign area of all signs on one parcel of land is not more than 128 square feet; and,
- (5) all signs are located more than 15 feet away from any public road from which the sign is visible.

[See WCC sections 110.504.10 (definition of a temporary sign) and 110.504.45(g) (temporary signs)]

**Mobile or portable signs:** Mobile signs and portable signs mounted on motor vehicles or trailers are permitted under the following conditions:

- (1) the sign must be painted or directly attached flat against the exterior surface of the vehicle or trailer, stake racks or other standard vehicle accessories used to confine loads;
- (2) the vehicle or trailer must be currently licensed and registered by DMV and must be legally operable and capable of being operated on the public roads;
- (3) the vehicle or trailer must be required for and used to transport people or goods in connection with the business or other activity or interest being advertised; and,
- (4) the sign may not be illuminated and may not contain letters or symbols which are manually replaceable in order that the copy can be easily changed from time to time.

[WCC section 110.504.45 (a)] If all the above conditions are satisfied, a permit<sup>1</sup> is not required, and the mobile or portable signs do not count against numerical or size limits on a parcel outlined in the sign code.

**Hand Held signs:** A permit<sup>1</sup> is not required for hand held signs and they do not count towards any numerical or size limits on a parcel.

**Signs on Public Property:** While hand held signs and handbills are allowed in public forum areas, no person may erect a sign on or over real or personal property, easements or rights of way owned by a public agency or by a privately owned public utility, [WCC section 110.504.70] and, in accordance with WCC 110.504.35 (h), the County does not permit the erection of signs in the right of way or on utility poles, street light standards, trees or fences.

- Any sign unlawfully erected on property, easements or rights of way owned by a public agency or a privately owned public utility will be removed by either the Sheriff's Office or the Department of Public Works. No advance notice of removal will be given, but the signs will be stored for 30 days to allow the sign owner to retrieve the sign.

**Prohibited signs:** Even if they would be permitted as temporary, hand held, or mobile signs, the following signs are prohibited:

- (1) signs which constitute a hazard to traffic or pedestrians;
- (2) signs located within any stream or drainage channel;
- (3) three dimensional figures of humans or animals;
- (4) signs which produce odor, sound, smoke, flame or other emissions;
- (5) signs which imitate or simulate official signs or which use yellow or red blinking or intermittent lights resembling danger or warning signals;
- (6) Strobe lights or individual light bulbs exceeding 75 watts, if rays of light projected directly from the source into residences or streets, or any moving beam of light;
- (7) wind signs, other than those exempted; and,
- (8) moving signs.

If a sign is placed on property in violation of the sign code (see section 110.504 of the Washoe County Development Code), the County will normally contact and may take action against the property owner where the sign is located.

If you have any questions, please contact: Renée Schebler, Community Services Department, Planning and Development Code Compliance staff at 328-6106.

Very truly yours,



David Solaro, Acting Director  
Community Services Department

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<sup>1</sup> **Permit required.** Electronically animated and flashing signs and electronic variable message signs require a permit even if they are temporary, hand held, or mobile signs. [WCC section 110.504.40 (d)]