

**CATAWISSA BOROUGH  
COLUMBIA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**ORDINANCE 01-2021**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF CATAWISSA ESTABLISHING REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE SIZE, DIMENSIONS AND LOCATIONS OF SIGNS WITHIN THE  
MUNICIPALITY.**

**WHEREAS**, Catawissa Borough seeks to meet the legitimate demands for signage without the unsightly intrusion of an unlimited number of signs of inappropriate size, dimension and location; and,

**WHEREAS**, Catawissa Borough is empowered by the laws of the United States and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to enact ordinances and regulations designed to secure and promote the health, safety and welfare of residents and to prohibit certain conditions, actions or activities that adversely affect the same; and,

**WHEREAS**, Catawissa Borough Council deems it to be in the best interests of the residents of Catawissa Borough, and all other persons who shall find themselves within the limits of the Borough, to enact an ordinance mandating appropriate size, dimension and location of signage within the Borough of Catawissa; and therefore,

**BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED** by the Borough Council of the Borough of Catawissa, and it is hereby Ordained and Enacted by the authority of the same.

**GENERAL REFERENCES**

Property Maintenance — See Ch. 240.

Zoning — See Ch. 345.

**DEFINITION OF TERMS.**

Signage can include a variety of different types of signs, each with unique functions. The following list itemizes and describes the types of signs considered under the provisions of this part:

**ADVERTISING SIGN BOARDS (BILLBOARDS)**

A sign or board which attracts the attention of motorists or pedestrians to a product, place or activity that exists or occurs at a location other than the location upon which the sign is situated; i.e., an off-premises sign.

**DIGITAL MESSAGE BOARD**

Signs or boards erected outdoors which electronically or mechanically, using movement or change of lighting, either natural or artificial, use letters and words or images only to direct persons to a business establishment or call the attention of a person to a product, place or activity or which communicates public service messages. These signs are only permitted in the (B-1) Central Commercial District.

**DIRECTIONAL SIGNS**

Signs containing directional information about public places owned or operated by federal, state or local government or their agencies; publicly or privately-owned natural phenomena; historic, cultural, scientific and religious sites; and areas of natural scenic beauty or naturally suited for outdoor recreation.

**FREE-STANDING SIGN**

Any sign not attached to a structure.

**OFFICIAL TRAFFIC SIGNS**

Signs constructed and maintained by Catawissa Borough, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or other entities that are required by local, state, or federal law or regulation.

**PARALLEL WALL SIGN**

A type of wall sign which is attached parallel to the face of its supporting wall, and which does not protrude more than 12 inches from such wall.

#### **PERMANENT SIGN**

A sign which is displayed or intended to be displayed for more than 60 days in a continuous six-month period, and which is permanently or securely attached to or installed on the ground or an existing structure in such a manner that it does not permit convenient removal or reuse of the sign.

#### **PROJECTING WALL SIGN**

A type of wall sign with its horizontal plane attached at right angles to its supporting wall and which protrudes more than 12 inches from such wall.

#### **PROMOTIONAL DEVICE**

A sign or other device, display or structure, distributed at little or no cost, to promote an event, service, activity, brand or business.

#### **PROPERTY POSTING SIGN**

Signs that show such information as "Private Property," "No Trespassing," "No Hunting," "Beware of Dog," or other similar verbiage, that may be required to protect a property owner or occupant's rights under local, state or federal law or regulation.

#### **SIGN**

Any device, display or structure readily visible from public property and used primarily for visual communication for the purpose of, or having the result of, bringing the subject thereof to the attention of a person, group of persons, or the public generally. A sign includes, but is not limited to, any and all reading matter, letters, numerals, pictorial representations, emblems, trademarks, flags, banners, streamers, pennants, inscriptions, and patterns whether affixed to a building, painted or otherwise depicted on a building, or separate from any building and shall include window signs.

#### **TEMPORARY SIGN**

Any sign which is displayed or intended to be displayed for a period of time limited to less than 60 days in a continuous six-month period and which is not permanently or securely attached to or installed on the ground or an existing structure.

#### **GENERAL SIGN REGULATIONS.**

1. The following regulations shall apply to all permitted sign uses:

##### **A. Construction, Maintenance and Removal.**

- (1) No sign shall be hereafter erected, re-erected, constructed, altered or maintained except as provided by this ordinance.
- (2) Signs shall be constructed of durable materials, be maintained in good condition, and shall not be allowed to become dilapidated or endanger public health, safety or welfare.
- (3) All signs shall be securely fastened in order to prevent their displacement by the elements.
- (4) Each sign shall be removed when the circumstances leading to its erection no longer exist, or if its condition deteriorates as indicated above.
- (5) Painting, repainting, cleaning, or repair maintenance shall not be considered an erection or alteration, unless a structural change is made.

##### **B. Sign Area.**

- (1) For the purposes of this chapter, sign area shall include the entire face of a single side of a sign, including all advertising surface, trim and border area, but excluding any supporting framework or bracing.
- (2) A double-faced sign shall be considered a single sign, unless the interior angle formed by the two sides of the sign is greater than 45°, then each side of the sign shall be considered to be a separate sign.
- (3) Where a sign consists of individual letters or symbols attached to a building, the area of the sign shall be considered to be the smallest rectangle or other regular geometric shape which encompasses all of the letters and/or symbols.

### **C. Placement.**

(1) No sign (whether temporary or permanent) shall be placed within the clear sight triangle of any intersection nor at any other location that could obstruct or impair a motorist's clear vision. Clear Sight Triangle Requirements. No obstructions or plantings measuring higher than 30 inches or hanging lower than 10 feet above the established grade of the street at the property line shall be permitted within the clear sight triangle of any street intersection. A clear sight triangle shall be defined as that area of unobstructed vision at a street intersection formed by lines of sight between points at a given distance from the intersection of street center lines. These distances shall be as follows:

(a) For the intersection of two local streets, the distance from the intersection of the street center lines shall be 50 feet.

(b) For the intersection of a local street and a collector road, the distance from the center line intersection shall be 75 feet.

(c) For the intersection of two collector roads, the distance required shall be 100 feet.

In addition, no sign shall be located where it could be an impediment to pedestrian traffic.

(2) No sign, other than an official traffic sign, shall be erected within the right-of-way of any street, unless authorized by the Borough Council for a special purpose.

(3) No portion of a freestanding sign (whether temporary or permanent) shall be located closer to a street right-of-way or front property line than 5 feet, except for official traffic signs or as may be provided otherwise in these regulations.

(4) No sign shall be erected or maintained which could prevent free ingress or egress from any door, window, or fire escape, nor shall any sign be attached to a standpipe, fire escape, or the eave of any building.

(5) Signs placed in a general floodplain district shall be subject to the regulations of the underlying district, except that no sign in any floodplain area may substantially impede natural drainage or the flow of water.

(6) No sign shall be painted, erected, affixed or maintained on a tree, stone (except for ornamental or architectural stones that may be used to identify a business or personal property), or other natural object, except for property posting signs. Any advertisement proposed to be painted or displayed upon a barn or other building shall be regarded as a sign, and as such shall meet the requirements set forth in this chapter for the district in which it is to be located.

### **D. Height.**

(1) Sign height shall be measured from the average finished grade of the site beneath the sign to the height point of the sign or sign structure, whichever is greater. No person(s) shall artificially increase the maximum height of a sign by altering the grade at the base of the sign.

(2) No freestanding sign (whether temporary or permanent) located in Zones R-1 (Low-Medium Density Residential), R-2 (Medium-High Density Residential) or C-1 (Conservation District) shall exceed 6 feet in height. In the B-1 (Central Commercial) and I-1 (Light Industrial) Districts, the height of freestanding signs may not exceed 18 feet or the height of the principal building on the property where the sign is to be located, whichever is less. (See also 3B(1) below, regarding the height for advertising sign boards.) Where located in a parking, vehicular or pedestrian circulation area, freestanding signs shall have a minimum under-clearance of nine feet, measured from the ground or pavement immediately beneath the sign to the bottom or lowest part of the sign.

(3) No portion of a wall sign, whether parallel or projecting, shall extend above the top of the wall to which it is attached.

### **E. Projection.**

(1) Parallel wall signs may not extend more than 12 inches from the surface to which they are mounted or attached, nor in any way interfere with pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

(2) Projecting wall signs shall not extend or project more than six feet from their supporting structure or wall, nor shall any such sign extend over a public street or walkway more than 18 inches.

(3) Projecting wall signs shall have a minimum under-clearance of no less than nine feet, measured from the ground or pavement immediately beneath the sign to the bottom or lowest part of the sign.

### **F. Illumination.**

(1) Illuminated signs shall cause no glare or other disturbance which would be incompatible with the nature of the neighborhood where the sign is located or which would in any way impair the vision of passing motorists. Illumination shall be steady in nature, not flashing, moving or changing in brilliance, color or intensity. No flashing or animated signs shall be permitted except for digital message boards which shall be permitted as special exceptions in the Central Commercial (B-1) district. No illuminated signs are allowed in the Conservation District (C-1).

(2) To help preserve the character of the Borough and avoid disturbing neighbors in the vicinity of the sign, all internally illuminated signage shall be lit with non-glaring bulbs or other lighting, and all externally illuminated signs shall be lit with shielded spotlights or other sources, angled from the top to the bottom of the sign.

#### **G. State Regulations.**

All applicable state regulations shall be met where signs are proposed in areas adjacent to highways included in Penn DOT's primary highway systems. A written copy of Penn DOT's determination shall accompany all applications for signs in such areas.

#### **H. Obscene Signs.**

Obscene signs are prohibited. No sign shall utilize sexually explicit or suggestive language or graphics nor any illustration of "specified sexual activities" or "specified anatomical areas" nor shall it bear language, images, or graphics deemed obscene by the Pennsylvania Crimes Code.

### **2. Signs in the R-1 (Low-Medium) and R-2 (Medium-High Density) Residential Districts.**

Signs may be placed or located in the R-1 (Low-Medium Density Residential) and R-2 (Medium-High Residential) Districts, subject to the following specified requirements:

#### **A. Signs Permitted Without a Permit.**

The following types of signs may be permitted in the R-1 (Low-Medium Density Residential) and R-2 (Medium-High Residential) Districts without a permit as indicated below. Such signs may be designed as either freestanding or parallel wall signs. (See also Chapter 1C and 1D, regarding placement and height requirements for such signs.)

##### **(1) Property Posting Signs.**

Signs which indicate the private nature of a property, a driveway, or restrict or prohibit activity may be permitted as follows:

(a) Maximum size: four (4) square feet.

(b) Maximum number: no more than one (1) such sign per property, unless the property is situated on a corner, in which case one sign may be erected on each frontage.

##### **(2) Residential Name Plates or Personal Identification Signs.**

Signs which display the name of the property owner and/or address of the property on which they are located may be permitted as follows:

(a) Maximum size: two (2) square feet.

(b) Maximum number: no more than one (1) such sign per property, unless the property is situated on a corner, in which case one sign may be erected on each frontage.

(c) May be illuminated.

##### **(3) Institutional Signs.**

Signs for schools and churches may be permitted as follows:

(a) Maximum size: ten (10) square feet.

(b) Maximum number: one (1) sign, unless fronted on more than one street, then one (1) sign for each street frontage.

##### **(4) Directional Signs**

Directional signs may be permitted as follows:

(a) Maximum size: four (4) square feet.

(b) Maximum number: one (1) sign, unless fronted on more than one street, then one (1) sign for each street frontage.

##### **(5) Temporary Signs.**

The following temporary signs are permitted without a permit:

(a) **Political Election Signs.**

- 1) Maximum size: four (4) square feet.
- 2) One temporary sign may be located on the property 60 days prior to an election and up to 20 days after election date, involving candidates for a federal, state or local office, or issues on the ballot that represent or affect the district in which the property is located per issue and per candidate.

**(b) Zoning Notification Signs.**

- 1) Maximum size: nine (9) square feet.
- 2) Must be removed fifteen (15) days after action of Borough Council.

**(c) Sale or Rental Signs.**

- 1) Maximum size: four (4) square feet.
- 2) The owner must consent and the property is being offered for sale or lease through a licensed real estate agent;
- 3) If not offered for sale through a real estate agent, when the sign is owned by the property owner and that property is offered for sale or lease by the owner.
- 4) Sign may remain in place for a period of 15 days following the date on which a contract of sale or lease has been executed by a person purchasing or leasing the property.

**B. Signs Permitted With a Permit.**

The following types of signs may be permitted in the R-1 (Low-Medium Density Residential) and R-2 (Medium-High Density Residential) Districts with a permit as indicated below. Such signs may be designed as either freestanding or parallel wall signs. (See also Chapter 1 C and D, regarding placement and height requirements for such signs.)

**(1) Project Development Signs.**

- (a) Maximum size: eight (8) square feet.
- (b) Maximum number: one (1) sign per property, unless the property is situated on a corner, in which case one sign may be erected on each frontage.

**(2) Farm Product Signs.**

- (a) Maximum size: four (4) square feet.
- (b) Maximum number: one (1) sign per property, unless the property is situated on a corner, in which case one sign may be erected on each frontage.

**(3) Promotional Devices.**

- (a) Maximum size: four (4) square feet.
- (b) Maximum number: one (1) sign per property, unless the property is situated on a corner, in which case one sign may be erected on each frontage.

**3. Signs in the B-1 (Central Commercial) and I-1 (Light Industrial) Districts.**

Signs may be placed or located in the B-1 (Central Commercial) and I-1 (Light Industrial) Districts, subject to the following specified requirements:

**A. Signs Permitted Without a Permit.**

Those signs permitted in Chapter 2A, Signs Permitted Without a Permit, in the R-1 (Low-Medium Density Residential) and R-2 (Medium-High Density Residential) Districts may also be permitted in the B-1 (Central Commercial) and I-1 (Light Industrial) Districts at the same size, in the same quantity, and in the same style. Such signs in this zone may also be externally or internally illuminated.

**(1) Professional Identification Signs.**

Signs which identify a professional office or suite located in the property in which they are located may be permitted as follows:

- (a) Maximum size: two (2) square feet.
- (b) Maximum number: one (1) sign, unless fronted on more than one street, then one (1) signs for each street frontage.
- (c) May be illuminated.

**B. Signs Permitted With a Permit.**

The following types of signs may be permitted in the B-1 (Central Commercial) and I-1 (Light Industrial) Districts as indicated below. Such signs may be designed as either freestanding or parallel or projecting wall signs. (See also Chapter 1C and 1D, regarding placement and height requirements for such signs.)

**(1) Enterprise Identification Signs and Advertising Sign Boards (Billboards).**

Signs for businesses located on the same premises as the sign location and advertising sign boards (billboards) may be permitted as follows:

(a) Maximum size: one hundred (100) square feet.

(b) Maximum number: one (1) sign per property, unless fronted on more than one street; in which case two (2) signs with aggregate size not exceeding 100 square feet. Enterprise Identification Signs may have two parallel faces, but may not be vertically or horizontally doubled, nor multiplied further in any fashion. (See also Chapter 1B(2) for further sign area details.)

(c) There shall be no more than one freestanding sign and one parallel or projecting wall sign per lot in this zone.

(d) No advertising sign board shall exceed 18 feet in height or the height of the principal building on the property where the sign is to be located, whichever is less.

(e) Where located in a parking, vehicular or pedestrian circulation area, advertising sign boards shall have a minimum under-clearance of 15 feet, measured from the ground or pavement immediately beneath the sign to the bottom or lowest part of the sign.

(f) Maximum total sign area shall not exceed 100 square feet per property, regardless of the type of sign(s) utilized or the number of frontages available.

(g) May be illuminated.

**(2) Project Development Signs.**

(a) Maximum size: ten (10) square feet.

(b) Maximum number: one (1) sign per property, unless the property is situated on a corner, in which case one sign may be erected on each frontage.

(c) May be illuminated.

**(3) Digital Message Boards.**

Digital message boards shall be permitted upon the granting of a special exception, only in the Central Commercial District (B-1), and only in accordance with the standards listed below:

(a) Applications for special exception must be filed by the land owner and may not be filed by tenants of the subject property.

(b) Digital message boards may not allow the display or message to change more frequently than once every six seconds, with a transition period of one second or less.

(c) Digital message boards must have installed an ambient light monitor, which shall continuously monitor and automatically adjust the brightness level of the display based on ambient light conditions consistent with the terms of this article.

(d) The maximum brightness levels for digital message boards shall not exceed 0.2 foot-candle over ambient light levels measured from the property line, consistent with the terms of this section. Certification must be provided to the Borough demonstrating that the sign has been preset to automatically adjust the brightness to these levels or lower. Reinspection and recalibration may be periodically required by the Borough in its reasonable discretion, at the permittee's expense, to ensure that the specified brightness levels are maintained at all times.

(e) Brightness of digital signs shall be measured as follows:

(1) At least 30 minutes following sunset, a foot-candle meter shall be used to obtain an ambient light reading for the location. This is done while the sign is off or displaying black copy. The reading shall be made with the meter aimed directly at the sign area at the present location.

(2) The sign shall then be turned on to full white copy to take another reading with the meter at the same location.

(3) If the difference between the readings is 0.2 foot-candle or less, the brightness is properly adjusted.

(f) Digital message boards shall be situated within the right-of-way of any public street. No such sign shall be erected, which will effectively limit proper sight distance.

(g) Digital message boards shall not exceed 30 square feet in area.

(h) Digital message boards shall not exceed 20 feet in height above the average grade of the proposed site.

(i) The sign area for digital message boards shall be calculated including all trim and border area, but shall exclude the main supporting structure, base and apron.

(k) Digital message boards shall be limited to one per business structure, regardless of the number of business units which are located on the premises. More than one unit connected by roof lines or supporting or connecting construction shall be deemed to be one business structure if any business or commercial activity is conducted therein or thereon.

(k) Digital message boards shall be permitted to be located either on an external wall of a structure or erected on a freestanding pole.

(l) The erection of a digital message board shall not affect the number, type or size of signs otherwise permitted under these regulations.

**4. Signs in the C-1 (Conservation) District.**

Signs may be placed or located in the C-1 (Conservation) District subject to the specified requirements:

**A. Signs Permitted Without a Permit.**

Those signs permitted in Chapter 2A, Signs Permitted Without a Permit, in the R-1 (Low-Medium Density Residential) and R-2 (Medium-High Density Residential) Districts, may also be permitted in the C-1 (Conservation) District at the same size, in the same quantity. No illuminated signs are permitted in the C-1 (Conservation) District.

**5. Permit Requirements.**

1. A zoning permit shall be required for the placement, erection, or alteration of all temporary and permanent signs, except as may be exempted pursuant to Chapters 2A, 3A and 4A above. All applications for signs being erected on property other than that owned by the applicant shall also include notarized permission from the property owner.

2. Fees for the issuance of zoning permits for signs shall be paid to the Borough upon filing of an application for such use. All such fees shall be in accordance with the schedule of fees established by resolution of the Borough Council. There shall be no fee for the erection of any sign necessary to the public welfare.

**I HEREBY CERTIFY** that, this Ordinance was adopted by the Council of Catawissa Borough at the regular scheduled meeting on February 8th, 2021.

ATTEST:

CATAWISSA BOROUGH

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Secretary

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Council President

Approved this 8th day of February, 2021.

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Mayor of Catawissa