



CITY OF HOUSTON

Legal Department

Annis D. Parker

Mayor

Donna L. Edmundson
City Attorney
Legal Department
P.O. Box 368,
Houston, Texas 77001-0368
City Hall Annex
900 Bagby, 4th Floor

T. 832.393.6491
F. 832.393.6259
www.houstontx.gov

June 26, 2015

CANDIDATE PACKET ENCLOSURE

Re: Political signs in the City's rights-of-way and on City property

Dear Candidate:

This letter is to inform you of the following regarding political signs in the City's rights-of-way and on City property:

- **Placing signs in City rights-of-way or on City property without specific approval of the City is illegal under both the City Sign Code and the Code of Ordinances.** These prohibitions apply to political signs as well as to general advertising signs. The City expends considerable resources in enforcing prohibitions against what are commonly referred to as "bandit signs."
- Each candidate who files for a place on the ballot in the November 2015 elections will be reminded by letter and by email (if contact information is available to the City) that it is illegal to place political signs in the City rights-of-way or on City property, and that the candidates will be held responsible for the actions of their supporters with regard to the placement of signs. Candidates are expected to inform their campaign staff and volunteers of the prohibitions and policies regarding political signs.
- Similar notice will be provided to all sign companies for which the City has contact information reminding the sign companies of the prohibitions against placing signs in the City rights-of-way or on City property.
- Vehicles bearing campaign signs larger than a bumper sticker are prohibited from parking in City parking lots serving a polling location unless campaign supplies are in the process of being loaded or unloaded. Parking is scarce at polling locations so occupation of parking spaces by

vehicles for the purpose of advertising, political or otherwise, will not be tolerated; such vehicles will be towed at the owner's expense.

- At the West Gray Multiservice Center, the presence of people with signs in the median between the entrance/exit to the front parking lot has resulted in visibility and safety issues. Thus, no one may sit, stand, or place any signs or equipment in the median.
- Canopies and oversized umbrellas (such as beach and patio umbrellas) are prohibited.
- Tables, chairs, and other such items and equipment must not impair or impede in any way the use of parking lots, streets, roadways, driveways, sidewalks, walking paths, fire hydrants, or other similar conveyances or structures by the motoring public, pedestrians, or City employees.

City Rights-of-Way and City Property. While the general prohibitions and policies prohibiting signs continue in effect, the City recognizes that historically the practice has been to allow the placement of campaign signs on City property used as a polling place and in City rights-of-way adjacent to polling places. Apparently this practice has significance to candidates and the City is willing to accept such activity on City property and in the City rights-of-way as follows:

- Campaign signs may not be placed adjacent to early voting locations prior to the beginning of early voting for both the election and the runoff election.
- Campaign signs may not be placed adjacent to polling places not used for early voting prior to the day before Election Day for both the election and the runoff election.
- Campaign signs shall have back-to-back (two-sided) copy only (no three dimensional, multiple faced signs), shall not exceed four square feet in size, with no dimension greater than two feet, and shall not be displayed at a height greater than three feet above ground level measured from the top of the sign to the ground.
- Campaign signs may be displayed only by attachment to the ground; no signs may be attached to light poles, telephone poles, fences, pylons, fire hydrants, trees, other signs, or any other fixture or structure.
- Campaign signs must be placed in a manner that does not impair or impede in any way the use of parking lots, streets, roadways, driveways, sidewalks, walking paths, fire hydrants, or other similar conveyances or structures by the motoring public, pedestrians, or City employees. Signs must not be placed in any part of any driveway or parking space at a polling location.
- Campaign signs may not be placed closer to a polling location than the electioneering marker.
- The number of campaign signs used at each location by each candidate must be reasonable.

- The City will not act as referee to resolve disputes between campaigns regarding the use of signs as outlined herein; candidates are presumed to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the dignity of the office they seek.
- Campaigns which observe these conditions in the use of campaign signs will not be subject to the penalties delineated herein. However, the City reserves the right to remove any unpermitted signage in the public rights-of-way that may cause an unsafe condition.
- These conditions for the use of City rights-of-way or City property apply exclusively to the upcoming November 2015 elections and any subsequent runoff elections.

If the City finds a political sign in the City right-of-way or on City property or receives a complaint verified by the City of such a sign that is not in compliance with the Sign Code and this letter, the City may contact the candidate or the campaign office of the candidate whose sign is in the City right-of-way or on City property to advise the candidate the sign must be removed within 24 hours, or else the City may:

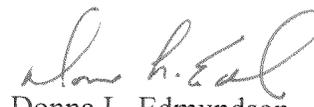
- (1) **Remove the sign;**
- (2) **Issue a citation to and prosecute in municipal court the candidate and, where possible, the sign company or any individual directly involved in placing the sign illegally, and**
- (3) **File suit under state law to recover civil penalties in an effort to recoup the City's costs of removing the sign.**

In the event a sign is removed and subsequently put back or replaced with another sign for the same candidate at the same location, no further notice will be given and the City may proceed with enforcement.

We sincerely hope all candidates, who presumably have the best interest of the City at heart, will make the effort to conduct their campaigns in conformance with the City's sign controls and avoid placing their signs illegally in the City rights-of-way or on City property.

Questions about the City's Sign Code may be addressed to the Sign Enforcement Section, Department of Neighborhoods, at 832-394-0689.

Sincerely,



Donna L. Edmundson
City Attorney