



**CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS**

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### *Dripping Springs Sign Ordinance Now in Effect*

Date: January 7, 2009

**Editors Note:** If you have any questions regarding this press release, please call City Administrator Michelle Fischer or Deputy City Administrator Ginger Faught at 512-858-4725.

DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS – Dripping Springs City Council adopted a new Sign Ordinance at their regular council meeting on December 9, 2008 and began enforcing it as of January 1st. The ordinance effects the development and use of property within the corporate limits of the City of Dripping Springs and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) but is not involuntarily retroactive to existing signage.

City Administrator Michelle Fischer said the new ordinance replaces an outdated sign ordinance that was adopted in March 1999. She said the ordinance requirements are all very different and encourages the business community to review the new provisions before planning, installing or requesting a permit for new signs. Some of the changes are a reduction in the maximum area of signs, a reduction in the maximum height of signs, an increase in types of prohibited signs, and the addition of cumulative sign limitations.

Fischer said the new Sign Ordinance had been researched and considered for several years because of a growing citizen concern to prevent traffic hazards and reduce the clutter and aesthetic harm that had begun to dot the rural landscape and highway corridors.

Business owners had also reported that the old, obsolete sign ordinance allowed for signs that were actually counterproductive to their businesses because the clutter and number of signs on or near each building made it more difficult for prospective customers to locate goods and services.

“Our goal throughout the process was to promote roadway and pedestrian safety as well as maintain the value of Dripping Springs’ scenic beauty and rural charm,” Fischer said. “The challenge was to balance the needs of the businesses and the town’s residents.”

As one of many steps before the adoption of the new ordinance, Council received public input from the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce members, the Dripping Springs Independent School District, and Scenic Texas. Numerous public hearings on the subject were also held to give citizens opportunity to participate in the process.

City Council Person Bill Foulds said the Sign Ordinance was the most discussed and researched ordinance the Council has worked on in a long time. “I hope we have done things to improve the appearance of the roadside and allow for adequate direction for our citizens and visitors,” Foulds said.

After a lengthy process of gathering community input, consulting with numerous experts, and studying other community’s ordinances, a unanimous vote of approval was made by the Dripping Springs City Council. In this newly adopted ordinance, the Council set specific standards for any new commercial signs. The intent was to ensure future signs are properly constructed and maintained, compatible with the historic, rustic and architectural character of Dripping Springs as well as meeting driver and pedestrian safety guidelines authorized by the laws of the State of Texas.

City Attorney Alan Bojorquez said the new rules are easy to understand, which will improve compliance and enforcement of the ordinance. “Dripping Springs is a beautiful area and the new sign ordinance will help our community avoid the clutter that comes with a proliferation of signs,” Bojorquez said.

City Council Person Joe Volpe said the Council wanted to make certain that the size and heights of any new signs erected were more uniform and in line with the lower monument style of signs that are in place in most of the existing businesses. “Drivers get distracted when there are billboards and a bunch of signs of different sizes and heights. It also takes away from the scenery and makes our community unattractive,” Volpe said.

Councilman Volpe also emphasized that the new Sign Ordinance is not retroactive. “If the sign is already there, owners are not required to take them down. However, if the sign is damaged or needs to be replaced, they will have to conform at that time.” Additionally, certain redevelopment of a building and the issuance of a permit for a new sign on property will require all nonconforming signs on the property to be brought into conformance.

While the City Council hopes to encourage businesses to voluntarily bring their nonconforming signs into compliance with the new ordinance, they are happy to provide incentives such as waiving the application fee or any permit fees related to a specific property.

The Sign Ordinance is now available at the Dripping Springs City Hall by request or on the City of Dripping Springs website at [www.cityofdrippingsprings.com](http://www.cityofdrippingsprings.com). If you have any questions regarding the ordinance or would like to have the document emailed to you, please call city staff at 512-858-4725.

The maximum criminal penalty for non-compliance with the Sign Ordinance is \$500.00 each violation. Each day that a provision of the ordinance is violated constitutes a separate offense. The City may also seek civil remedies to enforce the Sign Ordinance.