

# **SIGNS, SIGNS... EVERYWHERE?**

## **BY Palmetto Bay Village Clerk Meighan Rader**

The next election in Palmetto Bay is scheduled for November 2. The position of Mayor, Councilmember-District 1, and Councilmember-District 3 are being contested. As election activity increases, political signage becomes one of the most visible aspects of a campaign. In some instances, overzealous campaign workers may place signs in illegal locations. Illegally-placed signs may pose a threat to public safety if they block an intersection or sidewalk. Other times, signs are placed on public property or private property without permission. In order to ensure a successful campaign season and also preserve our beautiful park-like environment, Palmetto Bay has established regulations for temporary political signs that are provided to all municipal candidates.

The Village Clerk's Office receives many calls regarding political signs, and the laws that govern their use. In an effort to inform candidates and political committees about the laws that govern the use of political signs, the Clerk's office has compiled the following information. In addition, penalties for non-compliance and the various agencies charged with the responsibility of enforcing the rules and regulations governing political signs is provided. If you have questions, contact Village Clerk Meighan Rader at 305-259-1234 or [mrader@palmettobay-fl.gov](mailto:mrader@palmettobay-fl.gov)

### ***Where can signs be posted?***

- Signs may be placed on residential property (with the owner's permission). If the home has a sidewalk, the sign must be placed between the sidewalk and your home. Otherwise, the sign must be placed at least five feet from the edge of the road.
- Any political sign must be placed at least five feet from the adjacent property line.

### ***How many signs can be posted?***

Only one political sign, per candidate, per street face is permitted. Meaning, if you live on a corner lot, you may have two signs – one facing each road that your property fronts.

### ***Where can signs not be posted?***

It is unlawful for any candidate for any public office, or for any person acting for or on the candidate's behalf, to fasten or attach in any manner whatsoever any political or campaign sign, poster, advertisement or notice upon:

- Village of Palmetto Bay or County public right-of-way (often the area between the road and sidewalk)
- US-1 highway right-of-way
- Sidewalks
- Any area that interferes with drivers' visibility
- Any area that interferes with pedestrian or vehicular movement
- Any trees, pole, utility box, bus bench, trash can, fire hydrants, or fences

Campaign signs erected on the public right of way will be removed without notice to the candidate or political committee and disposed of at Village Hall. Remember, political signs can not be affixed on private/public property without first obtaining the consent of the owner or agent thereof.

***How large can campaign signs be?***

Signs can not exceed 22 x 28” in size in residential zoning districts. Temporary political signs can not exceed six square feet in area in all other zoning districts.

***What are the regulations concerning content/appearance?***

All political signs must prominently state “Political advertisement paid for and approved by [Name of Candidate] for [office sought].” (Florida Statute 106.143)

- No balloons or inflatable signs
- No animation or moving, revolving, or visible movement, including any projected image or noise.
- Nothing on the sign should be of such intensity or shine that they cause a glare or impair vision of any motorist, cyclist, or pedestrian.
- Candidates or committees must not use the words “stop”, “look”, “danger”, or any similar word that may be reasonably confused with, construed as, or conceal a traffic device.

***How long can a sign be posted?***

There is no regulation concerning how long a sign can remain prior to an election. After the election; however, all signs must be removed within seven days. Additionally, if a candidate withdraws from running for elected office, sign must also be removed within seven days of the withdrawal.

***What’s the penalty for violating the ordinances governing placement of political signs?***

The penalty is \$50 per sign.

***Who should be called if someone is suspected of violating any of the ordinances governing political signs?***

Complaints should be directed to the Village Code Compliance Division at 305-259-1261. Again, signs illegally posted on public right-of-way will be removed and disposed of at Village Hall.

**SIGNS AT POLLING PLACES**

Campaign signs must be erected outside of an area 100 feet from a polling place location. In addition, all campaign workers and candidates must observe the 100-foot rule when distributing campaign literature and materials near polls on election day (Florida Statute 102.031(4)(a)).

**STOLEN OR VANDALIZED CAMPAIGN SIGNS**

In cases where political signs are being stolen or vandalized, the Village Police Department (305-259-1270) should be contacted to file a formal complaint. Violators are subject to arrest for trespassing, destruction of property, or theft.

Keep in mind that the owner of the property is responsible for proper placement of a political sign. In other words, it is your yard or your business – if a candidate places a sign illegally, you will be responsible for the penalty.

### **DEMOCRACY IN ACTION**

Whether you like political signs or not, please remember to cast your vote at each election. Democracy in the United States gives residents the power to have their voices heard. Additionally, voting today couldn't be easier – if you can't make it to the polls, you can request an absentee ballot. Voting is a privilege that too many people take for granted. If you haven't registered to vote, do so today – if you are registered, remember that the elected official you voted for works for you – use your voice and vote.

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