

ARTICLE VIII. - SIGN CONTROL

Sec. 32-515. - Title.

This article shall be known as the "Sign Control Ordinance of Oconee County, South Carolina."

Sec. 32-516. - Purpose.

It is the purpose of this article to establish regulations for the safe and orderly placement, for all signage to which this article applies in the unincorporated areas of the county; also, this article shall establish penalties such as are necessary to discourage the violations of these standards, and to establish appropriate fees to offset costs associated with implementation.

Sec. 32-517. - Authority.

This article is adopted pursuant to the provisions of S.C. Code 1976 § 4-9-30. Personnel employed by the county administrator as code enforcement officers and personnel employed by the Sheriff of the county shall be vested with the authority to enforce and administer signage control within the county.

Sec. 32-518. - Jurisdiction.

The regulations set forth in this article shall be applicable within the unincorporated areas of the county. All billboards and signs to which this article applies which are constructed in the unincorporated areas of the county after the date of adoption of these standards shall be permitted under these regulations. Billboards and signs existing at the time of adoption of these standards shall be considered exempt, with the exception of any structure considered abandoned, disassembled, or otherwise removed from a site.

Sec. 32-519. - Terms and definitions.

Except where specifically defined herein, all words used in this article shall carry their customary meanings. Words used in the present tense include the future tense; the singular number includes the plural. The word "shall" is mandatory.

Abandoned billboard or sign means a billboard or sign which is not being maintained as required by S.C. Code § 57-25-110, *et seq.*, and the regulations promulgated pursuant thereto, or which is overgrown by trees or other vegetation not on the road right of way, or which has an obsolete advertising message or no advertising message for a period of six months. Any public service signage shall not be considered abandoned under this definition

Billboard means any advertising structure that directs persons to a different location from where the billboard is located or which makes no reference to a location. The sign area of a billboard ranges anywhere from 250 50 square feet to 672 square feet.

Existing billboard means for the purposes of these regulations any billboard either erected within the boundaries of the county prior to adoption of this article, or duly permitted by an agency of the county subsequent to adoption of this article.

Four-lane road means any public road or highway consisting of four or more travel lanes.

Sign means any sign structure or combination of sign structure and message in the form of an outdoor sign, display, device, figure, painting, drawing, message, plaque, poster, advertising structure, advertisement, logo, symbol or other form which is designated, intended or used to advertise or inform in relation to the premises on which it is located, any part of the message or informative contents of which is visible from the main traveled way. The term does not include official traffic control signs, official markers, nor specific information panels erected, caused to be erected, or approved by the South Carolina Department of Transportation.

Sign area means the entire face of a sign or billboard, including the advertising surface and any framing, trim, or molding, but not including the supporting structure.

Sign permit means any permit, other than a building permit, obtained by an applicant from the county for the purpose of the construction or maintenance of a sign or billboard or a permit obtained for any temporary or political sign as defined by this article.

Stacked signs or billboards means any structure so configured to present two or more sign areas at different elevations and/or presenting two or more sign areas facing in the same direction.

Two-lane road means any public road or highway consisting of two travel lanes allowing traffic to flow in opposite directions. Such roads may or may not also have at various locations turning lanes, medians, islands, or other traffic control features designed to enhance the safe and efficient utilization of the thoroughfare.

Sec. 32-520. - Requirements for billboards and other commercial signs.

- (a) Unless exempted hereby, all signs and billboards erected in the unincorporated areas of Oconee County shall be permitted under the provisions of this article.
- (b) No billboard shall be erected within 1,300 feet of an existing billboard located on the same road. This distance shall be measured as the shortest route of ordinary pedestrian or vehicular travel along the public thoroughfare from the location of an existing billboard to the proposed site.
- (c) Signs with a sign area greater than or equal to 50 square feet, but less than or equal to 75 square feet, shall be permitted on two lane roads. No billboards or signs with a sign area greater than 75 square feet shall be permitted on two lane roads.
- (d) No sign shall contain more than [250] feet of sign area per sign face. This excludes structures considered billboards as defined by this chapter, which may contain up to 672 square feet of sign area.
- ~~(d)~~ No billboard shall be located along any federal, state, or county designated scenic highways or roadways.
- (ef) Signs and billboards permitted under these regulations shall impose no obvious hazards to any drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or other users of any public road in the unincorporated areas of Oconee County. as such, the following materials shall be submitted to the Community Development Director or his/her designee at the time of application:
 - (1) A completed application form;
 - (2) A detailed site plan prepared and stamped by a surveyor licensed by the State of South Carolina, noting the proposed location of the structure, and verification that the new sign or billboard meets with all location requirements set forth in this article;
 - (3) A set of construction plans, to include all proposed lighting features. All plans submitted shall be stamped by appropriate professionals licensed by the State of South Carolina;
 - (4) Appropriate fees.
- (eg) No stacked billboards shall be permitted within the unincorporated areas of Oconee County.

(fh) An abandoned billboard or sign, as defined by this article, shall be removed by the owner thereof or the owner of the property upon which the billboard or sign is located within 45 days of notification by an the county building official that the billboard or sign is deemed abandoned. The billboard or sign owner and/or the property owner may appeal the county's designation of the billboard or sign as abandoned under this article to the magistrate's court of the county during the 45-day period to remove the billboard or sign. If the property owner files a timely appeal, the time period for removing the billboard or sign shall be tolled until the magistrate's court renders a decision. In the event that an abandoned billboard or sign is removed, the billboard or sign owner and/or the property owner shall have the right to replace it with a new billboard or sign of the same size and height and for the same location for a period of six months from the date of removal.

Sec. 32-521. - Exemptions.

Any sign or billboard with a sign or billboard area less than 50 square feet shall be exempted from these regulations.

Sec. 32-522. - Fees.

Fees shall be established for the cost of a sign permit by county council from time to time.

Sec. 32-523. - Permits.

Upon satisfactory completion of all requirements set forth in this article, the owner/agent shall be issued a land use permit by the Community Development Director or his/her designee for construction of the billboard or sign. The land use permit shall be valid for six months from the date of issue; the owner/agent may be granted a one-time six-month extension, provided a written request is submitted to the planning director no later than seven working days prior to the original expiration date. Request for extension shall include documentation of efforts to obtain other necessary permits and permissions needed to begin construction, specifically noting reason for extension request. Extensions shall be granted only to those projects that were delayed through no fault of the owner/agent of the billboard or sign. The land use permit issued by the planning director shall in no way be construed to be a building permit needed to begin construction of a sign. No building permit, or other county-issued permit, certification or approval, shall be issued for a billboard or sign prior to the issuance of the land use permit.

Sec. 32-524. - Penalties.

Any person or entity violating the regulations set forth in this article is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined up to \$500.00 dollars or imprisoned for 30 days or both.

Secs. 32-525—32-600. - Reserved.