



# CITY OF NEWBURYPORT

## PARKS COMMISSION

### SIGNAGE POLICY

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## INTRODUCTION

The Parks Commission receives requests by individual citizens and groups for permission to place permanent or temporary signs in the city's parks. The City of Newburyport has a signage ordinance ([Code of Ordinances, Appendix A Zoning Ordinances, Section VIII](#)). This ordinance provides definitions and regulations for size and positioning of signs within the city and should be reviewed by petitioners prior to requesting permission from the Parks Commission. No signs are allowed on public property without required permits.

This policy is to guide requests for <small> permanent and temporary signs within the city's parks only.

### Definitions (from City Ordinance)

*Sign.* Any device, structure, or object for visual communication that is used for the purpose of bringing the subject thereof to the attention of others.

*Banner sign.* Signs made of cloth, fabric, paper, nonrigid plastic or similar types of material.

*Freestanding sign.* A sign attached to the ground and supported by uprights placed on or in the ground.

*Temporary sign.* Any sign, banner, pennant, or advertising display intended to be displayed for a limited time-period. Easily removed signs attached to windows are considered temporary signs.

## GUIDANCE FOR REQUESTING A SIGN

Please read the criteria on page 4 that will be used by the Parks Commission when granting permission for a sign in a park. Presentation to the Parks Commission should include as much of the following information as relevant:

- (a) The type of sign requested.... permanent or temporary
  - Identification – to orient individuals and identify facilities and properties (buildings, offices, parks, playgrounds, rail trails, vistas, amenities, boundaries); may be directional to show the location of a facility, park, or project.
  - Information – rules of use, park regulations, hours, seasonal information.
  - Interpretive – exhibits, education, messages, plaques, markers, panels (see appendix A for further guidance)
  - Accessibility – programs and facilities accessible to persons with unique needs.
  - Warning – to provide public safety or prevent unauthorized entry or use.
- (b) Where the sign will be placed
- (c) The material and wording.
- (d) The dimensions of the sign.
- (e) Cost and source of funds.
- (f) The purpose of the sign (Is there a problem/issue to be addressed by the sign?)

- (g) The intended audience (What do you hope the audience will feel, think, or know after seeing the sign?)
- (h) Traits of the audience you have considered in developing the sign – language, cultural considerations, visual impairments.
- (i) If the sign is temporary, what is the time-period requested?

In developing messages on signs and other communications tools, resource specialists should strive to achieve the following\*:

1. Be positive in approach, uniform in application, and minimal in the quantities of signs produced.
2. Review the message from the visitor's viewpoint: Does it answer the questions? Does the message provide a solution to the visitor's problem or dilemma? Is there sufficient interest for all the information? Is all the information necessary?
3. Keep messages on signs to a single subject. Use two signs to avoid mixing unrelated messages.
4. Keep the message simple, clear, and straightforward.
5. Threatening or shocking messages do not necessarily encourage compliance. Use them only in extreme situations, such as where life-threatening hazards exist.

\*Adapted from Sign Guidelines for Outdoor Public Use - US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation.

**CRITERIA FOR PARK COMMISSIONERS TO USE WHEN DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF SIGNAGE**

Type of Sign Requested	Permanent	Temporary

Purpose of Sign	Identification or Directional	Informational	Interpretive	Accessibility	Warning

*Identification/Directional – to orient individuals and identify facilities and properties (buildings, offices, parks, playgrounds, rail trails, vistas, amenities, boundaries); may be directional to show the location of a facility, park, or project*

*Informational – rules of use, park regulations, hours, seasonal information*

*Interpretive – exhibits, education, messages, plaques, markers, panels*

*Accessibility – programs and facilities accessible to persons with unique needs*

*Warning – to provide public safety or prevent unauthorized entry or use*

Justification for the sign (would another means of communication be more effective?)	
Alignment with Parks Commission’s Mission	
Does the sign serve the entire community, or is it the sign solely in the interest of an individual, business, or nonprofit?	
Is the sign universally accessible?	
Does the sign need to be vetted by another city agency, abutters etc. prior to Parks Commission approval.	
Is the sign’s design uniform with existing signage? Does it incorporate uniform and relevant city colors, logos, and seals?	
Installation requirements – how will it be installed and who will install it?	
Cost and funding source	

Decision: Approve as presented: \_\_\_\_\_

Approve with the following conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Denied: \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons: \_\_\_\_\_

IF SIGN IS DEEMED APPROPRIATE, PARKS COMMISSION WILL USE THESE  
CRITERIA TO CONSIDER SITE SELECTION\*\*

The following will be considered:

1. Suitability of the view and environment and how it may be retained during construction, installation, and thereafter.
2. Relationship of the sign to the point of interest. The point of interest should be obvious.
3. Locate sign to enhance photographic value of the setting.
4. Suitable parking.
5. Availability of restrooms, water, and power.
6. Locate where vandalism will not be encouraged.
7. Esthetics of the location.
8. Barrier-free accessibility.

The Parks Department will consider the following when determining proper sign placement:

1. Sun and glare.
2. Shadows.
3. Orientation.
4. Protective shelter needs.
5. Traffic hazards (vehicle or foot).
6. Visitor safety, including barrier-free access.
7. Mounting height and angle will vary, depending on a number of factors. Trail signs should be placed low, about hand level. This is convenient for both wheelchair users and visually impaired visitors. Tilt sign at about a 45-degree angle for ease in reading and rain runoff. Other signs, those designed to be read from a car, for example, may be more easily read at a 90-degree angle.
8. Adverse effects of wind, insects, cold, heat, dust, bright sunlight, and other distracting elements to the visitor.
9. Avoid danger or discomfort to the visitors as they approach or stand at the sign. For example, overhanging or dead limbs, dangerous walks, rolling rock, cactus near the trail edge, or rough stones in the trail.

## MAINTENANCE OF SIGNS\*\*

The Parks Manager will periodically review the condition of signs in the park using the following criteria. The appropriate action will be taken upon consultation with the Parks Commission..

### Condition Ratings:

1. **Excellent.** Sign is new or in a like-new condition. Needs no attention. All lettering and symbols are legible. No vegetation or other objects obscure the sign.
2. **Good.** Sign has experienced some weathering, but its lettering and symbols are legible. The sign is intact, with no holes or broken portions. May need some cleaning to eliminate accumulated dirt and minor touchup painting. No vegetation or other objects obscure the sign.
3. **Fair.** Sign has been extensively impacted by weathering, requiring extensive cleaning and painting to restore it to its original condition. Lettering and symbols are legible, but barely so. Reflectivity is about half of the original. Vegetation is beginning to encroach on the sign, further detracting from the legibility of the message. Sign may have some holes or other minor damage, which can be readily repaired.
4. **Poor.** Sign is so weathered that its message is no longer legible. It has been refurbished at least once. It has severe damage from holes or other vandalism. It can be repaired temporarily, but it should be replaced as soon as possible.
5. **Missing/Destroyed/Obsolete.** Either the sign is gone or is so damaged that repairs are impossible, or the sign message is outdated or incorrect. If one or more of these conditions exists, and a sign is still needed, a replacement sign should be ordered immediately.

### NOTE:

Temporary Signs must be removed after the date of an event, by the event sponsors. If this is not done, the Parks Department will remove and destroy the signs on the Friday following the event.

APPENDIX A  
INTERPRETIVE SIGNS\*\*

Does the Interpretive Signage...

1. Provoke the attention or curiosity of the audience?
2. Relate the message to the everyday life of the audience?
3. Reveal the essence of the subject through a unique viewpoint?
4. Use a combination of well-written text and professional graphics to convey a message?
5. Increase visitor enjoyment through appreciation and understanding of features, concepts, themes, and stories of the natural, cultural, created, managed, and historic environments?
6. Explain management of public land resources?
7. Guide or modify visitor behavior to reduce visitor impacts to resources or facilities?

Considerations for determining the need for interpretive signs:

1. Is there something visitors can see, smell, or hear at the area that needs explaining?
2. Is there something interesting in the area that visitors will probably miss if not interpreted?
3. Will visitors get more from their experience if appropriate interpretive signs are provided?
4. Is interpretive signing appropriate, or will some other method work better?
5. Are there impacts or damage being caused by visitor use or behavior, which can be alleviated by an interpretive sign?
6. Will enough visitors see the sign to make it cost effective?
7. Is interpretive signing consistent with the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of the proposed area, if ROS is being used?
8. Will people with disabilities be accommodated (reference ADA and ABA 216)?

\*\*Adapted from other park department guidelines – multiple sources