

December 5, 2023

Bluff Planning and Zoning Commission
Amanda Podmore, Chair
PO Box 324
Bluff, Utah 84512

Subject: Request to Increase Sign Allowance

Dear Planning and Zoning Commission,

We would like to request a reconsideration of the current sign regulations under the zoning code and advocate for an increase in the allowance for signs, specifically the elimination of sign square footage maximum allowance, a modification regarding waving banners and flags, and a removal of the clause regarding off premise signs.

We have witnessed the challenges that local small businesses face in promotion and contributing to the economic development of our community. One of the key challenges we encounter is the restrictive sign ordinance that limits our ability to effectively market our establishments and attract visitors to our town. Unlike larger municipalities, the Town of Bluff does not currently allocate any funds for tourism promotion or visitation enhancement, placing the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of small businesses.

We kindly request the following specific changes to the sign ordinance:

- 1. Eliminate Sign Square Footage Maximum Allowance:** The current restrictions on sign size and square footage severely limit our ability to convey our messages effectively. Removing these limitations would allow businesses to create eye-catching and informative signs, benefiting both business owners and our customers.

We firmly believe the business owners can self-regulate sign square footage and create balance based on the size of their business vs “tacky over-signage”. The businesses need control to balance sign size, property size and business concept to create their own marketing tools and signs. One-size-fits-all does not work in this particular instance.

If the commission is unable to lift the restrictions on the sign square footage, we would like to know exactly how the square footage was calculated, what it was based on, or how it was developed. It feels arbitrary, but perhaps there was a very specific reason as to why it was implemented.

2. Modify Ban on Waving Banners and Flags: Instead of banning waving banners and flags altogether, we propose limiting the number of waving banners to a total of three (3) per business. This adjustment will help maintain a visually appealing streetscape while allowing businesses to promote special events,

offers, and services that may not be immediately apparent to passing traffic. Waving banners and flags should be kept in good shape (not torn, ripped, or faded), but they are a highly-effective, attention-grabbing system to notify passerby to a businesses' offerings.

3. Consider lifting the off-premise sign restrictions: While we do not fall into this category, it is incredibly difficult for current businesses to direct customers to their location if they are not located directly on main street or in a known location. While we recognize that most of the C-zoned areas do fall directly on Main Street, there are smaller home-based businesses who are or will be negatively impacted by this restrictive portion of the ordinance.

We wanted to also take a moment to speak to what we see as the “purpose” of a sign ordinance or section within the zoning code. We believe it was the intent of the those who crafted the original document to ensure the town’s viewscapes are preserved. Eyesore signs aren’t a good look for any town – that’s understandable. However, we implore the current commission to consider the blight of unoccupied buildings on main street. Aggressive, highly constrictive operating conditions directly hurt our smallest businesses. It is our hope that Bluff supports local entrepreneurs and encourages an environment in which our neighbors can run a successful business, bringing prosperity and tax revenue to our community. This includes the ability for businesses to be able to market themselves and draw attention to the offerings they are able to provide. If Bluff has specifically stated it doesn’t want large, box-store businesses, it’s imperative that you create ordinances that enable our local, small businesses to thrive.

While we fully understand the importance of preserving the aesthetic appeal of our town, we believe the proposed changes will strike a balance between promoting small businesses, while still maintaining a pleasing environment. We ask that you do not make the ordinance any more restrictive than it already is in terms of sign sizes, timeframes/duration of sign posting, or other measures that would further reduce a business’s ability to market itself.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your response and the opportunity to discuss this further.

Jacob and Erin Nelson
Canyon Smokehouse, Co-Owners