

Council Information Memo

To: Mayor Burton and Members of Council

From: Lily Lei, Manager, Right of Way Management

CC: Jane Clohecy, CAO
Phoebe Fu, Commissioner, Community Infrastructure
Jill Stephen, Director, Transportation and Engineering

Date: December 3, 2024

Subject: A-Frame Sign Permit Requirements and Fees

Purpose:

To provide an update on the permits required to place A-frame signs in the town's right of way and the process to reinstate the fees for these permits.

Background and Timelines

The A-frame sign permit fee is an annual charge for placing a sign in the right of way for the specified calendar year. Business owners must obtain a new permit each year they wish to display their sign in the right of way. These signs are generally used for restaurant advertisements during the patio season, and the permit is typically applied for alongside the patio permit. Generally, business owners decide whether to place a sign and apply for a permit in the spring of each year.

During the Lakeshore Road Reconstruction and Streetscape Project, Council approved several fee reductions, waivers and subsidies for the BIAs, including A-frame sign permits. These fee adjustments continued as part of the Commercial Recovery Initiative resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2024, the new seasonal patio program was implemented, and all related permits and fees were to be reinstated. However, due to implementation challenges A-frame fees were not collected

Comments

Communication with Businesses and Management of the Signs

To manage the number of signs in the right-of-way, one sign is permitted per business, it must not interfere with vehicular and pedestrian traffic and must adhere to the Municipal Right of Way By-law 2024-002.

As part of the transition back to reinstated fees, Staff communicated with the BIAs and business owners during the active 2024 patio season and hand delivered notices in August and September 2024. The notices stated that permits were required and that failure to comply would result in the removal of unpermitted signs. However, it came to staff's attention that the Road Corridor Permit information, which includes A-frame signs, was mistakenly removed from the Town's website, resulting in businesses being unable to apply for a permit. Rather than require businesses to retroactively apply for a permit and pay the fee, staff adopted an education-first approach for permit requirements. As a result, no fines were issued in 2024.

Action Plan

The full reinstatement of the A-frame sign permit process will begin on January 1, 2025. The Town will start accepting applications for A-frame sign permits from businesses within the BIAs on January 2, 2025. Beginning February 1, 2025, any signs found without a permit sticker on them, i.e. without a permit, will be removed in accordance with the Town's Municipal Right of Way By-law.

From now until February 1, 2025, if any signs are found in the right of way causing issues, such as obstructing pedestrian pathways or creating hazardous conditions, the owner will be asked to move them. Starting in early December 2024, advance communication about this plan will be provided to business owners through the BIAs and written notices will be sent to each business owner in early January 2025. This gives owners who wish to place a sign in the right-of-way a few weeks to apply for the permit and pay for the fee before February 1, 2025.

Financial Impact

Each year, around 50 businesses in the BIAs apply for A-frame sign permits. The 2024 annual fee was \$118 in accordance with the Town's Rates and Fees Schedule. Due to challenges in reinstating the permit, there was a revenue loss of approximately \$6,000.

Next Steps

Staff will review the option of a multi-year permit to provide flexibility and convenience for business owners planning to display their signs for multiple years. Staff will also review other Town permits that offer this option and conduct a fee review with the Rates and Fees update in 2025, as the Transportation and Engineering Department develops online applications for Road Corridor Permits.

Please contact the author if you have any questions regarding this memo.