

Q. When and why was the Billboard ordinance adopted?

A. This ordinance was first adopted in December of 2001, the first year that I was in office and was in response to the proliferation of billboards along Hwy. 515. At the time we had no regulations at all for billboards and desired to protect the beauty of our area while at the same time, support business. Just as you entered Union County on Hwy 515 from Blue Ridge and topped the ridge, there is a beautiful view of the mountains that welcomes us all back home when we have been to Atlanta, and is a beautiful way to welcome visitors as well. Unfortunately, one of the 90' high double billboards was placed there, and it really was a distraction to people entering the county.

Q. How were you able to have this billboard removed?

A. It was a negotiation process. We had no legal way to force it to be removed since at the time it was erected there were no guidelines or ordinance in place. In preparing our new ordinance, and totally with thanks to the owner of the billboard, he and I were able to negotiate some additional locations in place of this billboard and he completely removed the billboards, thus restoring this beautiful gateway view of our county.

Q. What is the definition of a billboard according to the ordinance?

A. It is an advertising sign or a sign which advertises a commodity, product, service, activity or any other person, place or thing, which is not located, found or sold on the premises upon which the sign is located and located along or near state or county highways or county roads or rights-of-way.

Q. What are the size requirements for a billboard?

A. Billboards cannot exceed 30 feet in height. Height is measured from the elevation of the road surface of the nearest roadway to the highest point on the billboard. Also, no billboard can exceed an area of 288 square ft. per face. Of course, billboards already in existence at the time were exempt.

Q. What are some of the other regulations concerning billboards?

A. All billboards must be located in such a way as to protect the scenic views of the county and cannot be located within 1,000 ft. of a church, public park, public playground, public recreation area, public forest, or cemetery. Billboards are restricted by distance from one another. There is also a setback of 25 ft. from the edge of any roadway.

Q. I have noticed in other counties where trees have been cut to allow for billboards. Can trees be cut in Union County in front of billboards?

A. No trees can be cut along any right-of-way on any county road before or after locating, placing or erecting a billboard, except where a legal permit has been obtained from the Georgia Department of Transportation. Any billboard permitted in the county adjacent to a state highway MUST be also permitted by the State of Georgia.

Billboard ordinance to be continued next week