



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
LAW DEPARTMENT

March 27, 2014

Honorable Board of Aldermen
City Hall
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143

Re: Order No. 196219
Report on Measures Relative to Permitting Language to Prevent Businesses with A-
Frame Signs on Sidewalks From Blocking Pedestrian Passage in Winter

Dear Honorable Board Members:

You have asked this office to report on what measures are in place or may be put into permitting language to prevent businesses with A-Frame signs on sidewalks from blocking pedestrian passage in the winter. Somerville Ordinance 12-14 provides that “[N]o person shall, except in accordance with a permit from the board of aldermen or as otherwise duly authorized, place, make or maintain any... signs...on any street or sidewalk...”

I am informed by the City Clerk that city permits issued for this type of sign include a condition that requires the maintenance of “a minimum clearance of” forty-two (42) inches on the sidewalk at all times. A permit example provided to this office included an additional condition as part of the City Engineer’s approval stating that an “[a]ccessible route around sign must be provided at all times.” In my opinion, the following language may be inserted as a condition for all such permits:

Signs shall be placed upon a sidewalk in such a manner as to: (1) provide an accessible route with a minimum clearance of 42” around the sign at all times, (2) not obstruct pedestrian traffic in any manner, and (3) be in full compliance with all applicable federal and state disability laws.

Please contact me if you have any additional questions.

Very truly yours,

Jason D. Grossfield
Assistant City Solicitor

cc: Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone
John Long, City Clerk
Betsy Allen, Director and ADA Coordinator
Melissa Miguel, Acting Director of Engineering