

Where did our flags go?

It seems the City of Cape Girardeau decided to ban all flags, banners, yard signs, etc. from businesses. The code enforcement officer stopped by my office and took our flags down on 2 November 2021. I asked him why the city was taking my flags down while leaving them at other businesses all over town. The response was “we’re enforcing it on Kingshighway”. I mentioned several other businesses were still displaying advertising and flags at their stores/offices and even mentioned several by name. He seemed sympathetic, but still no enforcement on other streets – just Kingshighway.

I sent the following message via the city’s webform:

2021-11-03 12:04 PM(CST) was submitted by Guest on 11/3/2021 1:04:57 PM (GMT-06:00)
US/Central
ward4

I have a quick question regarding the CODE OF ORDINANCES City of CAPE GIRARDEAU, MISSOURI. Do the codes listed pertain to the entire city or just certain parts of the city?

Mark

Jackson

573-335-0757

Received this reply the same day:

In response to your email below submitted online to your Council Member, the Code of Ordinances does apply to all property and areas within the city limits of the City of Cape Girardeau, Missouri. *(I knew this would be the answer, I just wanted it in writing from a city employee)*

On 17 December 2021 I sent another email to Director of Citizen Services/City Clerk, my Councilman for my home address and the Code enforcement Officer

Portions of the email:

I am writing in response to my message and (city’s reply) dated 11/03/2021 (below) regarding Cape Girardeau Code of Ordinances and the city’s spot enforcement and failure to enforce Sec. 25-506 throughout the city.

On 2 November at approximately 2:00 PM, (code enforcement officer) removed two blade flags in front of my office. I saw this happen and asked why he was taking my flags down. I introduced myself and we had a pleasant conversation. Mr. xxxxxx said city code states I cannot place a blade flag closer than thirty feet from the road. I suggested they were over thirty feet at which time we measured, and they were farther than thirty feet. I was then told that I could only have one flag and it had to be five feet or less in height. *(They don’t make 5 foot blade flags)*

At this point I asked why he was not enforcing this throughout the city and mentioned several other businesses not in compliance. I was told that he was instructed to enforce on Kingshighway. I then explained I understand the ordinance but expected it to be enforced throughout the city. As of today, it is not being enforced – even on Kingshighway. There are several yard signs, blade flags, banners, yard signs at many locations advertising for forklift operators, an advertising trailer parked at a building that is for sale and a lighted sign that is not dimmed at night on Kingshighway.

Sunday morning November 14th, I drove on the following city streets:

Kingshighway

William

Independence

Siemers Drive

Sprigg St.

Southern Expressway

Burtling

Route W (Cape LaCroix)

County Road 620

I saw:

16 blade flags (4 on city property) (city flags are 12 feet tall)

65 banners and yard signs

17 SEMO University yard signs

5 City yard signs advertising a job fair

3 trailers advertising businesses

I have pictures should you need additional proof.

Obviously, there are many code violations needing addressed – including the city ignoring their own rules/laws.

Summarizing, I expect the city to enforce their ordinances all over town – not spot enforcing. I would also request you revisit the size and number of flags businesses can display (safely) in front of their offices and stores.

I trust this will be addressed and resolved in a timely manner.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mark Jackson

On 20 December I received a call from Doug Weisbrod, City Code Enforcement. We had a cordial, long discussion. Summarizing the conversation, he said he understood my frustration and assured me they would enforce the ordinance throughout Cape but were understaffed and simply couldn't get this and the other tasks they had to do done in a timely manner. I asked when they started this enforcement. I believe he said July 2021.

As of today 5 February 2022, several businesses have removed the offending advertising. One in particular (one that I mentioned back in November) still has flags and yard signs approximately 10 feet from William Street. My question to the city is after more than 2 months with a specific complaint at a specific address why is this business still out of compliance? Is this business owner not subject to the rules the rest of us must follow? Does this business owner know someone at city hall and therefore is exempt from the ordinance? Does this mean the other businesses can ignore the ordinance as well?

Who at city hall decided businesses can't use a certain form of advertising their business? Is it because that person finds blade flags offensive? Tacky? Unattractive? Well, I can say I find grass and weeds growing in sidewalks and next to the curbs on Mt Auburn offensive, tacky and unattractive. I'm sure there is an ordinance about weeds and debris. Will the city add this complaint to the list of enforcement?

The city seems to still be spot enforcing their ordinances. I would like to hear other business owners' thoughts on this subject. If there is enough interest from other businesses, we could organize a group to confront the city council at an upcoming meeting and ask them directly why they are spot enforcing and what department, or individual decided to make it even harder for small business to advertise on their property without any citizen knowledge or input.

If you have a comment or thought about this issue, please email or call me.
Email netcom@networkcommunications.tv or call 573-979-0870