

FILE NO. 081002

ORDINANCE NO. 290-08

1 [Zoning – Repeat Violations of General Advertising Sign Requirements.]

2  
3 **Ordinance amending the San Francisco Planning Code by amending Section 610 to**  
4 **require response to a notice of violation to be given within 30 days instead of 45 days**  
5 **and to add subsection (f), which addresses repeat violations of general advertising**  
6 **sign requirements by a single entity on the same property; adopting findings, including**  
7 **environmental findings and findings required by Section 302 and Section 101.1 of the**  
8 **Planning Code.**

9 Note: Additions are *single-underline italics Times New Roman*;  
10 deletions are *strikethrough italics Times New Roman*.  
11 Board amendment additions are double underlined.  
Board amendment deletions are ~~strikethrough normal~~.

12 Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

13 Section 1. The San Francisco Planning Code is hereby amended by adding Section  
14 610(e), to read as follows:

15 Sec. SEC. 610. VIOLATION OF GENERAL ADVERTISING SIGN REQUIREMENTS.

16 (a) General. The penalties and methods of enforcement set forth in this Section 610  
17 are in addition to those set forth in Section 176 of this Code and any other penalties or  
18 methods of enforcement authorized by law. In light of the findings of Proposition G, approved  
19 by the voters in March of 2002, a violation of the Code's general advertising sign requirements  
20 is deemed to be a public nuisance.  
21

22 (b) Administrative Penalties. The Director of Planning may impose administrative  
23 penalties for violations of the regulations governing general advertising signs set forth in this  
24 Article, in accordance with the following procedures:  
25

1 (1) Notice of Violation.

2 (A) Upon the Planning Department's determination pursuant to Section 176 of this  
3 Code that a general advertising sign has been erected, installed, expanded, intensified,  
4 relocated, or otherwise operated in violation of the requirements of this Code or has been  
5 denied an in-lieu identifying number pursuant to Section 604.1(c) of this Code, the Director  
6 shall send a written notice of violation to the Responsible Party by first class mail or hand-  
7 delivery. The notice of violation shall describe the violation(s), state that the Responsible Party  
8 has ~~forty-five~~ thirty days from the date postmarked on the notice or from the date of hand-  
9 delivery of the notice to: (i) file an application for a permit to remove the general advertising  
10 sign; (ii) correct the violation(s) pursuant to Subsection (c); or (iii) request reconsideration  
11 pursuant to Subsection (d).

12 (B) Responsible Party. For the purposes of this Section 610, "Responsible Party" shall  
13 mean the owner(s) of the real property on which the general advertising sign is located, as  
14 listed in the Assessor's record, and the current leaseholder(s) or owner(s) of the general  
15 advertising sign, if different from the owner(s) of the real property. If the identity of the person  
16 or business entity that installed or operates the general advertising sign is unknown, the  
17 notice of violation shall be posted as close as practicable to the location of the sign; once the  
18 identity of the person or business entity is known, notice of violation shall be sent to such  
19 person or business entity without any such delay affecting the time limits, fees, or penalties  
20 imposed by this Section 610.

21 (2) Penalties.

22 (A) Accrual of Penalties. If a Responsible Party fails to respond to the notice of  
23 violation as outlined in Subsection (b)(1)(A), penalties shall accrue under this Section 610 at  
24 the daily rate set forth in Subsection (b)(2)(B) beginning on the ~~forty-sixth~~ thirty-first day and  
25

1 the Director shall refer the matter to the City Attorney for further action. If the Responsible  
2 Party responds after ~~forty-five~~ thirty days, but before the Director has referred the matter to  
3 the City Attorney, the Responsible Party shall be assessed a penalty based on the number of  
4 days that have passed between the end of the ~~forty-five~~ thirty-day period and the date the  
5 Responsible Party responded. Once the matter has been referred to the City Attorney for  
6 further proceedings, it shall be within the discretion of the City Attorney, in consultation with  
7 the Director, whether to allow the Responsible Party to request a reconsideration of the notice  
8 of violation or to proceed with other legal action. If the Responsible Party is allowed to request  
9 reconsideration, the Responsible Party shall pay a penalty based on the amount accrued  
10 between the end of the ~~forty-five~~ thirty-day period and the date the Responsible Party  
11 responded. The Responsible Party shall pay this penalty within five (5) business days of  
12 notice that the Responsible Party will be allowed to request reconsideration.

13 (B) Amount of Penalties. The administrative penalties that the Director or  
14 administrative law judge assesses against the Responsible Parties shall be related to the  
15 square footage of the general advertising sign found to be in violation of the Planning Code,  
16 as shown below:

- 17 (i) 100 square feet or less--\$100.00 per day per violation;
- 18 (ii) 101--300 square feet--\$1,000.00 per day per violation;
- 19 (iii) 301--500 square feet--\$1,750.00 per day per violation; and
- 20 (iv) Over 500 square feet--\$2,500.00 per day per violation.

21 If the violation for which the administrative penalty is assessed has increased the size of the  
22 general advertising sign, the penalty shall be based on the actual size of the general  
23 advertising sign.

1 (C) Collection. The Director may request that the Tax Collector pursue collection of  
2 any penalty, from the Responsible Party including imposition of a special assessment lien in  
3 accordance with the requirements of Article XX of Chapter 10 of the San Francisco  
4 Administrative Code (commencing with Section 10.230). The Director may also request that  
5 the City Attorney pursue collection of the penalty against the Responsible Party in a civil  
6 action to enforce the provisions of this Code.

7 (D) Planning Code Enforcement Fund. Fees and penalties collected pursuant to this  
8 Section 610 shall be deposited in the Planning Code Enforcement Fund established in  
9 Administrative Code Section 10.100-166.

10 (c) Building Permit. A building permit shall be required to remove or modify any  
11 general advertising sign when such removal or modification is required pursuant to this  
12 Section 610.

13 (1) Additional time and material costs shall be added to the Building Permit fee  
14 pursuant to Section 350(c).

15 (2) The Responsible Party has thirty days from the filing of any required building  
16 permit application to remove or modify the general advertising sign to either: (i) obtain a Final  
17 Inspection Approval or Certificate of Final Completion from the Department of Building  
18 Inspection (DBI); or (ii) remove all advertising copy from the general advertising sign until the  
19 required DBI approval is obtained. If the Final Inspection Approval or Certificate of Final  
20 Completion has not been obtained or the advertising copy has not been removed within this  
21 time period, penalties shall accrue at the daily rate outlined in Subsection (b)(2)(B) until the  
22 advertising copy is removed or the required DBI approval is obtained.

23 (d) Reconsideration of Notice of Violation or Administrative Penalty.

24 (1) Reconsideration Hearing.  
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1 (A) A Responsible Party may seek reconsideration of the issuance of the notice of  
2 violation or any administrative penalty. Any request for reconsideration shall be accompanied  
3 by written evidence that demonstrates why the notice of violation was issued in error or why  
4 the administrative penalties were assessed in error. Upon receipt of a request for  
5 reconsideration within the time limits established by Subsection (b)(1)(A) or when allowed  
6 under Subsection (b)(2)(A), the Planning Department shall schedule a reconsideration hearing  
7 before an administrative law judge. Such hearing shall be scheduled for a date no later than  
8 60 days after the request. At least 10 days before the scheduled hearing, the Planning  
9 Department shall notify the Responsible Party by mail in writing of the hearing date, time, and  
10 location.

11 (B) The administrative law judge shall hold a hearing to reconsider the director's  
12 notice of violation or administrative penalty. The administrative law judge's decision for a  
13 reconsideration of the notice of violation shall be based upon, but not limited to, the Planning  
14 Code, any final Zoning Administrator Interpretations, the Building Code, building permits  
15 issued by the City, and any final decisions of the Board of Appeals regarding the subject  
16 property. The administrative law judge's determination of a request for reconsideration of any  
17 administrative penalty shall take into account the validity of accrual dates, accuracy of  
18 assessment based upon sign size and whether the Responsible Party was accurately  
19 identified. Within 30 days of the hearing, the administrative law judge shall issue a final written  
20 decision, which shall be mailed to the Responsible Party. The final written decision shall not  
21 be appealable to the Board of Appeals. All final written decisions shall inform the Responsible  
22 Party of its right to seek judicial review pursuant to the timelines set forth in Section 1094.6 of  
23 the California Code of Civil Procedure.  
24  
25

1 (C) If the Planning Department rescinds the notice of violation or penalties prior to the  
2 reconsideration hearing, the case shall be considered abated and all accrued penalties shall  
3 be rescinded. If penalties or the reconsideration hearing fee set forth in Subsection (d)(2),  
4 below, have been paid, the Planning Department shall refund in a timely matter any unused  
5 portions of the penalties or fee.

6 If the administrative law judge overturns the notice of violation or penalties, the case  
7 shall be abated and all accrued penalties shall be rescinded. If penalties have been paid, the  
8 Planning Department shall refund the penalties.

9 If the Responsible Party withdraws its request for reconsideration of notice of violation  
10 or penalties prior to the reconsideration hearing and cures the violation(s) by filing for a  
11 building permit under subsection(c), any accrued penalties shall apply in addition to a  
12 mandatory ten-day fixed penalty based upon the daily rate outlined in Subsection (b)(2)(B). If  
13 the request for reconsideration is withdrawn within less than 10 days from the date it was  
14 timely made, the Responsible Party may apply to the Director for a reduction in the fixed  
15 penalty amount based upon the number of days less than 10 that the reconsideration request  
16 was withdrawn. Any such reduction shall be granted or denied at the sole discretion of the  
17 Director and is not appealable.

18 If the administrative law judge upholds the notice of violation or penalties, the  
19 Responsible Party shall cure the violation(s) by filing for a building permit pursuant to the  
20 procedures and requirements of Subsection (c) within fifteen days of the date the decision is  
21 mailed to the Responsible Party. The Responsible Party shall be subject to any accrued  
22 penalties, plus a mandatory twenty-day fixed penalty based upon the daily rate outlined in  
23 Subsection (b)(2)(B). If the reconsideration hearing is held within less than 20 days from the  
24 date it was timely requested, the Responsible Party may apply to the Director for a reduction  
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1 in the fixed penalty amount based upon the number of days less than 20 that the  
2 reconsideration hearing was held. Any such reduction shall be granted at the sole discretion  
3 of the Director and is not appealable. If the Responsible Party does not file for a building  
4 permit within the fifteen-day period, additional penalties shall accrue at the daily rate outlined  
5 in Subsection (b)(2)(B) and the Director shall refer the case to the City Attorney for further  
6 action.

7 (2) Reconsideration Hearing Fee. At the time the Responsible Party requests  
8 reconsideration, the Responsible Party shall pay an initial hearing fee of \$3,400.00 to the  
9 Planning Department; the Responsible Party shall also be liable for time and materials as set  
10 forth in Section 350(c). The Planning Department shall increase this fee on an annual basis at  
11 a rate equal to that of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The fee shall be waived if the  
12 Responsible Party would qualify for a waiver of court fees and costs pursuant to California  
13 Government Code Section 68511.3, as amended from time to time. Additionally, if the  
14 Responsible Party withdraws its request for reconsideration, any portion of the fee not  
15 expended to process the hearing shall be refunded.

16 (3) Postponement. The administrative law judge may grant a postponement of a  
17 hearing for Good Cause. Requests for postponement of a hearing shall be made in writing at  
18 the earliest date possible, with supporting documentation attached. The party requesting the  
19 postponement shall notify any other parties of the request and provide them with copies of the  
20 complete request and the supporting documentation.

21 For the purposes of this Section 610, "Good Cause" includes, but is not limited, to the  
22 following:

23 (A) The illness of a party, an attorney or other authorized representative of a party, or  
24 a material witness of a party;

1 (B) Verified travel outside of San Francisco scheduled before the receipt of notice of  
2 the hearing; or,

3 (C) Any other reason which makes it impractical to appear on the scheduled date due  
4 to unforeseen circumstances or verified pre-arranged plans that cannot be changed. Mere  
5 inconvenience in appearing shall not constitute "good cause."

6 (e) Failure of the City, including the Director, the Planning Department, or the  
7 administrative law judge, to act within any of the timeframes set forth in this Section 610 shall  
8 not be considered approval of any general advertising sign.

9 (f) Repeat Violations.

10 (1) The Director of Planning may use the provisions of this subsection (f) to abate and  
11 discourage repeated violations of this Section 610.

12 (2) For the purposes of this subsection, a repeat violation shall mean any violation of the  
13 general advertising provisions of this Article which (1) occurs on a property that was the subject of a  
14 notice of violation under Article 6 during the previous five years and (2) is owned by the same entity  
15 which owned the property upon which the general advertising was located at the time of the earlier  
16 violation. A repeat violation shall not include one based upon a notice of violation that was overturned  
17 by an administrative law judge or rescinded by the Planning Department under subsection (d)(1)(C).

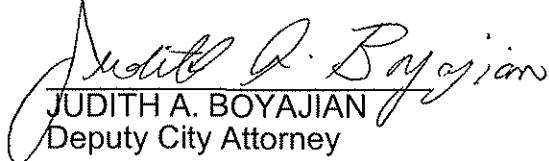
18 (3) Violations under this subsection (f) shall be treated like other violations of Section 610  
19 except that (i) the 45-30-day period identified throughout subsection (b) shall be reduced to three  
20 business days, (ii) the penalties set forth in subsection (b) shall begin to accrue on the fourth day, and  
21 (iii) the general advertising sign and any sign structure must be completely removed from the site  
22 within the three-day period. A Responsible Party may seek reconsideration under subsection (d),  
23 provided that



1 the request for reconsideration is filed and all general advertising copy is removed prior to expiration  
2 of the three-day period.

3  
4 APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
5 DENNIS J. HERRERA, City Attorney

6 By:

  
7 JUDITH A. BOYAJIAN  
8 Deputy City Attorney

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# City and County of San Francisco

City Hall  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

## Tails Ordinance

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**File Number:** 081002

**Date Passed:**

Ordinance amending the San Francisco Planning Code by amending Section 610 to require response to a notice of violation to be given within 30 days instead of 45 days and to add subsection (f), which addresses repeat violations of general advertising sign requirements by a single entity on the same property; adopting findings, including environmental findings and findings required by Section 302 and Section 101.1 of the Planning Code.

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November 18, 2008 Board of Supervisors — PASSED ON FIRST READING

Ayes: 8 - Alioto-Pier, Ammiano, Chu, Elsbernd, Maxwell, McGoldrick, Peskin,  
Sandoval

Noes: 3 - Daly, Dufty, Mirkarimi

November 25, 2008 Board of Supervisors — FINALLY PASSED

Ayes: 10 - Alioto-Pier, Ammiano, Chu, Dufty, Elsbernd, Maxwell, McGoldrick,  
Mirkarimi, Peskin, Sandoval

Noes: 1 - Daly

File No. 081002

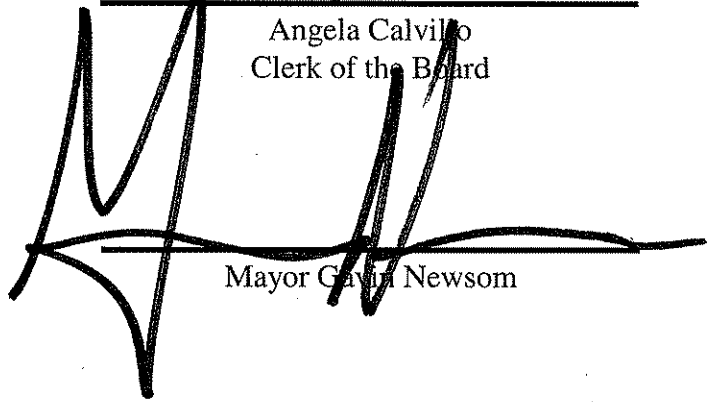
I hereby certify that the foregoing Ordinance  
was **FINALLY PASSED** on November 25,  
2008 by the Board of Supervisors of the City  
and County of San Francisco.

12/5/2008

Date Approved



Angela Calvillo  
Clerk of the Board



Mayor Gavin Newsom