REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Carlos P. Baía, Deputy City Manager for Development

DATE: April 21, 2021

SUBJECT: Ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances, Title I, General Code; Chapter 1, Government Organization; Article 1-5-Fees, Fines and Penalties; Schedule I, Section 26-1-6.1, Sign Fees

Recommendation:

Set the attached amendment for public hearing.

Background:

Under the current city ordinance, commercial signs that meet certain thresholds must be reviewed and approved by the Code Administration Division and the Concord Planning Board prior to the issuance of a City permit for installation. Unfortunately, there have been increasing instances of signs being installed without benefit of permit over the last few years. This contravention of the City's regulations has been a topic of significant concern to the Planning Board and some of the commercial establishments in the community who comply with the sign requirements. Community Development staff met with the Planning Board to review this matter and it has become clear that the existing ordinance does not provide sufficient financial disincentive to prevent the improper sign installations.

Discussion:

Under the current ordinance, the City can double the sign fee for a commercial sign installed without benefit of permit. Staff has been doing this but with the average sign fee of between $50-$125 the current financial penalty is nominal and appears to not be dissuasive to illegal behavior.

The change proposed in this amendment would add a new penalty fee of $25 per day for any sign installed prior to securing a permit from the Planning Board *in addition* to the existing doubling of the original sign permit fee. Staff believes that this change will modify behavior and ensure compliance. At its April 21st meeting, the Planning Board unanimously supported this proposed amendment. The attached amendment would alter the City's fee schedule associated with this change.