

FREE SPEECH IN CHAPEL HILL! FREE THE TELEPHONE POLES!



Chapel Hill Ordinance Sec. 16-3 (Placing notices, signs on utility poles, trees, prohibited; exception.)

No signs or notices for advertising purposes shall be fastened or tacked to telephone, telegraph or electric light poles or trees on the streets or sidewalks. However, the town manager may give permission for temporary signs to be placed on the streets or poles. (Comp. 1961, p. 44, § 3; Comp. 1961, pp. 51, 54).

Did you know it's illegal to hang posters or flyers on telephone poles in Chapel Hill? This ordinance is largely ignored, because people post flyers on Chapel Hill utility poles all the time, like they do in almost every other college town or city in America. But the law exists, and taxpayer money is spent for public works employees to remove such notices from the downtown area almost as soon as they are posted. On April 4, 2002, a local activist was detained, cited, and threatened with arrest after posting flyers on Franklin Street for a Banquet for Global Peace & Justice being held that night in Carrboro, which raised over \$2500 for social justice causes.

Obviously, this ordinance stifles free speech, discourages grassroots marketing by local businesses, wastes taxpayer money by treating messages posted by citizens as undesirable enough to be torn down and destroyed as quickly as they crop up, and leaves our town aesthetically worse off by relentlessly maintaining a landscape filled with cold, barren telephone poles littered with jagged, torn scraps of paper, when they could just as easily be covered with colorful, diverse posters representing the free exchange of ideas so central to what Chapel Hill is all about.

We, the undersigned, request that the Chapel Hill Town Council revise or repeal Chapel Hill Ordinance Sec. 16-3 to allow the posting of signs or notices for advertising purposes on utility poles, in order to encourage free speech and grassroots marketing by local citizens and businesses.

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