

CHAPTER 4

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Section 1. Exercise of police powers; authority.

The Town Commission hereby finds and declares that there exists within the Town limits and its environs unsafe structures which are a health or safety hazard as a result of the attraction of insects or rodents, conditions creating a fire hazard, dangerous conditions constituting a threat to children or frequent use by vagrants as living quarters in the absence of sanitary facilities. In order to alleviate these unsafe and dangerous conditions for the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens and its environs, a public necessity exists to exercise the police powers conferred upon the Town for the repair, closing or demolition of such structures.

Section 2. Definition of abandoned and/or unsafe structure.

An abandoned and/or unsafe structure is defined as a nonresidential building or structure which has not been occupied by authorized persons for at least six (6) months and which persistently or repeatedly becomes unprotected or unsecured, or which has been occupied by unauthorized persons, or which presents a danger of structural collapse, fire, disease, or a threat to children.

Section 3. Procedure for enforcement.

- (a) *Duty of code official.* It shall be the duty of the code official to examine non-residential structures located in the Town and its environs where conditions described in section 4-101 exist for the purpose of locating and taking action with respect to such structures as appear to be a health or safety hazard. In exercising this power, department members shall have the right to enter on any premises within the jurisdiction of the department at all reasonable hours for purposes of inspection or other enforcement action, upon presentation of proper credentials.
- (b) *Notice of complaint.* If the inspection discloses health or safety hazards as described in this article, the official shall affix a notice of unsafe character in a conspicuous place on the exterior wall of the structure giving notice of its unsafe or dangerous conditions and cause to be served upon the owner of and parties in interest to the structure a complaint stating the charges and containing a notice. If the owner of a building or structure that has been condemned as unsafe pursuant to G.S. §160A-426 shall fail to take prompt corrective measures, the official shall give him written notice, by certified or registered mail to the last known address or by personal service, that the building or structure is in a condition that appears to meet one or more of the following conditions:
 - (1) Constitutes a fire and safety hazard;
 - (2) Is dangerous to life, health, or other property;
 - (3) Is likely to cause or contribute to blight, disease, vagrancy or danger to children; or
 - (4) Has a tendency to attract person/s intent on criminal activities or other activities which would constitute a public nuisance.

A hearing will be held before the official at a designated place therein fixed, not less than ten (10) nor more than thirty (30) days after serving of said complaint. If the name or whereabouts of the owner cannot, after due diligence, be discovered, the notice shall be considered properly and adequately served if a copy thereof is posted on the outside of the building or structure in question at least ten days prior to the hearing and a notice of

the hearing is published in a newspaper having general circulation in the Town at least once, not later than one week prior to the hearing.

No oversight or dereliction of duty on the part of any official or employee of the Town shall be deemed to legalize the violation of any provision of this chapter or any provision of any regulatory code adopted in this chapter.

- (c) *Hearing.* The owner or any party in interest shall have the right to file an answer to the complaint and to appear in person or otherwise, and give testimony at the place and time fixed in the complaint. Any person desiring to do so may attend the hearing and give evidence relevant to the matter being heard. The rules of evidence prevailing in courts of law or equity shall not be controlling in hearings before the official.
- (d) *Procedure after hearing.* After such hearing, if the official finds that a structure constitutes a health or safety hazard, the code official shall state in writing the findings of fact in support of such determination. In such case, the official shall issue and cause to be served upon the owner thereof an order directing and requiring the owner to repair, close, vacate or demolish the structure as necessary to correct the health or safety hazard within a specified period of time.

Section 4. Appeal; finality of order if not appealed.

Any owner who has received an order under G.S. § 160A-429 may appeal from the order to the Board of Adjustment by giving notice of appeal in writing to the official and to the Town clerk within ten days following issuance of the order. In the absence of an appeal, the order of the official shall be final. The Board of Adjustment shall hear and render a decision in an appeal within a reasonable time. The Board of Adjustment may affirm, modify and affirm, or revoke the order

Section 5. Securing, closing and demolition by the Town.

If the owner fails to comply with an order of the official to repair, secure and close, vacate or demolish, the official shall take one (1) or more of the following actions as necessary:

- (a) Secure the issuance of a warrant charging such owner with violation of this article;
- (b) Secure and close said structure;
- (c) Cause such structure to be repaired, altered or improved; or
- (d) Cause such structure to be demolished.

State Law reference— Similar provisions, G.S. § 15-27.2

Section 6. Actions by Town Commission.

- (a) The powers of the official as set forth in section 8.95 (c) and (d) shall not be exercised until the Town Commission has by ordinance ordered the official to proceed to effectuate the purpose of this article with respect to the particular property or properties, which the official has found to be a health or safety hazard and which shall be described in the ordinance. Such ordinance shall be recorded in the office of the register of deeds of the county and shall be indexed in the name of the property owner in the grantor index.
- (b) The amount of the cost of such repairs, alterations or improvements, or vacating and closing, or removal or demolition by the official, shall be a lien against the real property upon which the cost was incurred, which lien shall be filed, have the same priority, and be collected as the lien for special assessment provided in G.S. § Ch. 160A, Art. 10. If the structure is removed or demolished by the official, he shall sell the materials of such

structure, any personal property, fixtures or appurtenances found in or attached to the structure, and shall credit the proceeds of such sale against the cost of the removal or demolition and any balance remaining shall be deposited in the superior court by the official, shall be secured in such manner as may be directed by the court, and shall be disbursed by the court to the persons found to be entitled thereto by final order or decree of the court.

Section 7. Failure to comply with order.

If the owner of a building or structure fails to comply with an order issued pursuant to G.S. §160A-429 from which no appeal has been taken, or fails to comply with an order of the Town Commission following an appeal, he shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor, additionally subject the offender to civil penalty to be recover by the Town pursuant article G.S. § 14-4.; Every day such person shall willfully fail or refuse to comply with any final order or direction of the code official or Town Commission made by virtue and in pursuance of this article shall constitute a separate and distinct offense.

Section 8. Lien on property.

The amount of the cost of such repair, alterations, improvements, vacating and closing, or demolition ordered by the Town Commission or by the official shall be a lien against the real property upon which such cost was incurred; said lien shall be filed, have the same priority and be collected or foreclosed upon in the same manner as is provided for assessments pursuant to G.S. § Ch. 160A, Art. 10.

Section 9. Other unlawful actions.

- (a) No person shall remove or permit the removal of any complaint, notice or order posted in accordance with the provisions of section 4-103 of this article.
- (b) It shall be unlawful for the owner of any building upon whom a notice, complaint or order has been served, to sell, transfer, mortgage, lease or otherwise dispose of said building unless one of the following actions have been taken:
 - (1) Compliance with the provisions of the notice, complaint or order; or
 - (2) Furnish a copy of any notice, complaint or order to the transferee, lessee, or mortgagee, and give written notice to the official of said action.

Section 10. Alternative remedies.

Neither this article nor any of its provisions shall be construed to impair or limit in any way the power of the Town to define and declare nuisance and to cause their abatement by summary action or otherwise, or the enforcement of any other remedy or remedies provided or in other ordinances of laws.

Section 11. Conflicts with other provisions.

In the event any provision, standard or requirement of this article is found to be in conflict with a provision of any other ordinance or code of the Town, the provision which establishes the higher standard or more stringent requirement for the promotion and protection of the health and safety of the residents of the Town and environs shall prevail.

Section 12. Unsafe buildings condemned.

An official may declare a nonresidential building or structure within a community development target area designated by the Town Commission, or within a development zone authorized by G.S. § 105-129.3.A or G.S. §160A-503(10) to be unsafe if it meets both of the following conditions:

- (1) It appears to the official to be vacant or abandoned; and
- (2) It appears to the official to be in such dilapidated condition as to cause or contribute to blight, disease, vagrancy, fire or safety hazard, to be a danger to children, or tend to attract persons intent on criminal activities or other activities which would constitute a public nuisance.

Section 13. Appeals in general.

Unless otherwise provided by law, appeals from any order, decision or determination by a member of a local inspection department pertaining to the state building code or other state building laws shall be taken to the commissioner of insurance or appointed designee or other official specified in G.S. § 143-139, by filing a written notice with him and with the inspection department within a period of ten days after the order, decision or determination. Further appeals may be taken to the state building code council or the courts as provided by law.

Section 14. Changes in work after permit issued.

After a permit has been issued, no changes or deviations from the terms of the application and permit or changes or deviations from the plans or specifications involving any work under the jurisdiction of this chapter shall be made until specific written approval of such changes or deviations has been obtained from the appropriate official.

Section 15. Report of owner's failure to comply with Code Official's order.

If the owner does not appeal from the final order or direction of the code official requiring that the building or structure be demolished and removed or the taking of such other steps as may be required to abate the nuisance and remove the hazards, and fails or refuses to comply with such order and direction, it shall be the duty of the official to file a written report thereof with the Town manager, who shall cause such report to be placed on the agenda for action by the Town Commission at its next ensuing regular meeting or at some subsequent meeting to which the Town Commission may continue the same. The code official shall mail a copy of such report by certified or registered mail to the owners last known address or have a copy of such report delivered to such owner. Such report shall specify the date of the meeting of the Town Commission for which the matter will be docketed for action.

Reserved