

**TOWNSHIP OF SADDLE BROOK  
COUNTY OF BERGEN  
ORDINANCE NO. 1781-25**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND SUPPLEMENTING CHAPTER 51 OF THE CODE  
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SADDLE BROOK ENTITLED “PROPERTY, ABANDONED”.**

**BE IT ENACTED AND ORDAINED**, by the Township Council of the Township of Saddle Brook those portions of the aforesaid set forth below are hereby amended as follows and that those portions of the Ordinance not set forth below shall remain unchanged.

Sec. 51-1 through 51-6 be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

**ARTICLE I**

**Abandoned Property Rehabilitation Act**

**Sec. 51-1. Definitions.**

Definitions relating to abandoned property (from N.J.S.A. 55:19-54):

ABANDONED PROPERTY — Any property that is determined to be abandoned pursuant to P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.);

AUTHORITY — New Jersey Redevelopment Authority pursuant to P.L.1996, c.62 (C.55:19-20 et al.)

PUBLIC OFFICER — A person designated or appointed to exercise the powers prescribed in this Chapter pursuant to Section 3 of P.L. 1942, c. 112 (N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.5).

**Sec. 51-2. Public Officer designated.**

The Township Construction Official is hereby designated and appointed the Public Officer to exercise the powers set forth in this Chapter. The Mayor and Council, by resolution, may designate any other person or persons having the qualifications set forth in the State Uniform Building Code to act in the place of the Construction Official.

**Sec. 51-3. Inventory of abandoned property.**

Inventory of abandoned property; list to be maintained; publication in official newspaper; notice to owner of record; challenge by owner (from N.J.S.A. 55:19-55): The Township may direct the public officer to identify abandoned property for the purpose of establishing an abandoned property list throughout the Township, or within those parts of the Township as the governing body may designate. Each item of abandoned property so identified shall include the tax block and lot number, the name of the owner of record, if known, and the street address of the lot.

- A. The public officer shall establish and maintain a list of abandoned property, to be known as the "abandoned property list." The Township of Saddle Brook may add properties to the abandoned property list at any time and may delete properties at any time when the public officer finds that the property no longer meets the definition of an abandoned property. An interested party may request that a property be included on the abandoned property list following that procedure set forth in Section 31 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-105).
- B. An abandoned property shall not be included on the abandoned property list if rehabilitation is being performed in a timely manner, as evidenced by building permits issued and diligent pursuit of rehabilitation work authorized by those permits. A property on which an entity other than the Township of Saddle Brook has purchased or taken assignment from the Township of a tax sale certificate which has been placed on the abandoned property list may be removed in accordance with the provisions of Section 29 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-103).
- C. The public officer shall establish the abandoned property list or any additions thereto by publication in the official newspaper of the Township of Saddle Brook, which publication shall constitute public notice, and, within 10 days after publication, shall send a notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, and by regular mail to the owner of record of every property included on the list. The published and mailed notices shall identify property determined to be abandoned, setting forth the owner of record, if known, the tax lot and block number and street address. The public officer, in consultation with the Tax Collector, shall also send out a notice by regular mail to any mortgagee, servicing organization, or property tax processing organization that receives a duplicate copy of the tax bill pursuant to subsection d. of N.J.S.A. 54:4-64. When the owner of record is not known for a particular property and cannot be ascertained by the exercise of reasonable diligence by the Tax Collector, notice shall not be mailed but instead shall be posted on the property in the manner as provided in Section 5 of P.L. 1942, c. 112 (N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.7). The mailed notice shall indicate the factual basis for the public officer's finding that the property is abandoned property as that term is defined in Section 35 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-54) and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, specifying the information relied upon in making such finding. In all cases a copy of the mailed or posted notice shall also be filed by the public officer in the office of the county clerk or register of deeds and mortgages, as the case may be, of the county wherein the property is situated. This filing shall have the same force and effect as a notice of lis pendens under N.J.S.A. 2A:15-6. The notice shall be indexed by the name of the property owner as defendant and the name of the Township as plaintiff, as though an action had been commenced by the Township against the owner.
- D. An owner or lienholder may challenge the inclusion of his property on the abandoned property list determined pursuant to Subsection B of this section by appealing that determination to the public officer within 30 days of the owner's receipt of the certified notice or 40 days from the date upon which the notice was sent. An owner whose identity was not known to the public officer shall have 40 days from the date upon which notice was published or posted, whichever is later, to challenge the inclusion of a property on the abandoned property list. For good cause shown, the public officer shall accept a late filing of an appeal. Within 30 days of receipt of a request for an appeal of the findings contained in the notice pursuant to Subsection D of this section, the public officer shall schedule a hearing for redetermination of the matter. Any property included on the list shall be presumed to be abandoned property unless the owner, through the submission of an affidavit or certification by the property owner averring that the property is not abandoned and stating the reasons for such averment, can demonstrate that the property was erroneously included on the list. The affidavit or certification shall be

accompanied by supporting documentation, such as but not limited to photographs, and repair invoices, bills and construction contracts. The sole ground for appeal shall be that the property in question is not abandoned property as that term is defined in Section 35 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-54). The public officer shall decide any timely filed appeal within 10 days of the hearing on the appeal and shall promptly, by certified mail, return receipt requested, and by regular mail, notify the property owner of the decision and the reasons therefor.

- E. The property owner may challenge an adverse determination of an appeal with the public officer pursuant to Subsection E of this section, by instituting, in accordance with the New Jersey Court Rules, a summary proceeding in the Superior Court, Law Division, sitting in the county in which the property is located, which action shall be tried de novo. Such action shall be instituted within 20 days of the date of the notice of decision mailed by the public officer pursuant to Subsection E of this section. The sole ground for appeal shall be that the property in question is not abandoned property as that term is defined in Section 35 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-54). The failure to institute an action of appeal on a timely basis shall constitute a jurisdictional bar to challenging the adverse determination, except that, for good cause shown, the court may extend the deadline for instituting the action.
- F. The public officer shall promptly remove any property from the abandoned property list that has been determined not to be abandoned on appeal.
- G. The abandoned property list shall become effective, and the Township of Saddle Brook shall have the right to pursue any legal remedy with respect to properties on the abandoned property list at such time as any one property has been placed on the list in accordance with the provisions of this section, upon the expiration of the period for appeal with respect to that property or upon the denial of an appeal brought by the property owner.

#### **Sec. 51-4. Sale of tax lien.**

Sale of tax lien on abandoned property; remediation costs (from N.J.S.A. 55:19-56):

- A. Notwithstanding N.J.S.A. 54:5-19 or the provisions of any other law to the contrary, if a property is included on the abandoned property list and the property taxes or other Township liens due on the property are delinquent six or more quarters as of the date of expiration of the right to appeal inclusion on the list, or, if an appeal has been filed, as of the date that all opportunities for appeal of inclusion on the list have been exhausted, then the tax lien on the property may be sold in accordance with the procedures in the "Tax Sale Law," N.J.S.A. 54:5-1 et seq., on or after the 90th day following the expiration of that time of appeal or final determination on an appeal, as appropriate. The Township of Saddle Brook may, at its option, require that the sale of the tax sale certificate or any subsequent assignment or transfer of a tax sale certificate held by the Township be subject to the express condition that the purchaser or assignee shall be obliged to perform and conclude any rehabilitation or repairs necessary to remove the property from the abandoned property list pursuant to Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-55) and to post a bond in favor of the Township to guarantee the rehabilitation or repair of the property. The public officer may waive a requirement to post a bond imposed by the Township of Saddle Brook for any purchaser, assignee or transferee of a tax sale certificate that provides documentation acceptable to the public officer that the purchaser, assignee or transferee is a qualified rehabilitation entity as defined in Section 3 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-80). The cost of rehabilitation and repairs and the cost of

the bond shall be added to the amount required to be paid by the owner for redemption of the property. The purchaser, assignee or transferee of the tax sale certificate who is required to rehabilitate and repair the property shall be required to file the appropriate affidavits with the Tax Collector, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-62, representing the amounts of monies expended periodically toward the rehabilitation or repair of the property. A purchaser, assignee or transferee shall be entitled to interest on the amounts expended, as set forth in the affidavits, at the delinquent rate of interest for delinquencies in excess of \$1,500 pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:4-67 of the Township of Saddle Brook in effect for the time period when the amounts were expended. The tax sale certificate purchaser, assignee or transferee, under the auspices and with the authority of the Township of Saddle Brook, shall be permitted to enter in and upon the property for the purposes of appraising the costs of rehabilitation and repair and to perform all other acts required to guarantee the completion of the rehabilitation or repair of the property. No rehabilitation or repair work shall be commenced, however, until proof of adequate liability insurance and an indemnification agreement holding the Township of Saddle Brook harmless is filed with the public officer. If the tax sale certificate is not purchased at the initial auction of the tax sale certificate and the Township of Saddle Brook purchases the certificate pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-34, then the Township of Saddle Brook is authorized and empowered to convey and transfer to the Authority or any of its subsidiaries, without receiving compensation therefor, all of its right, title and interest in that certificate; however, any portion of the amount paid to the Tax Collector to redeem the tax sale certificate that represents tax or other Township lien delinquencies and subsequent Township liens, including interest, shall be returned by the Tax Collector of the Township of Saddle Brook.

**B. Remediation.**

- (1) If the Township of Saddle Brook or the Authority or its subsidiaries acquires the tax sale certificate for a property on the abandoned property list, then, upon 10 days' written notice to the property owner and any mortgagee as of the date of the filing of the lis pendens notice under subsection d. of Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-55), that entity shall be permitted to enter upon the property and remediate any conditions that caused the property to be included on the abandoned property list. No remediation shall be commenced, however, if within that ten-day period the owner or mortgagee shall have notified the Township of Saddle Brook or Authority or its subsidiary, as appropriate, in writing, that the owner or mortgagee has elected to perform the remediation itself. When the owner or mortgagee elects to perform the remediation itself, it shall be required to post bond in favor of the Township of Saddle Brook or Authority or its subsidiaries, as appropriate, in order to ensure performance. The amount and conditions of the bond shall be determined by the public officer.
- (2) The cost of remediation incurred by the Township of Saddle Brook or the Authority or its subsidiaries pursuant to this subsection, as so certified by the entity incurring the cost upon completion of the remediation, shall constitute a lien upon the property first in time and right to any other lien, whether the other lien was filed prior to or after the filing of any lien by the Township of Saddle Brook or the Authority, except for Township taxes, liens and assessments and any lien imposed pursuant to the "Spill Compensation and Control Act," P.L. 1976, c. 141 (N.J.S.A. 58:10-23.11 et seq.), together with any interest thereon. The certification of cost shall be filed and recorded as a lien by the entity incurring the cost with the county clerk or register of deeds and mortgages, as appropriate, in the county in which the property is located.

C. Failure to remediate.

- (1) Failure of an owner or lienholder to remove a property from the abandoned property list within the period of time for appeal of inclusion of the property on the list pursuant to Subsection e. of Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-55), shall be prima facie evidence of the intent of the owner to continue to maintain the property as abandoned property.
- (2) The clearance, development, redevelopment, or repair of property being maintained as an abandoned property pursuant to Subsection C(1) of this section shall be a public purpose and public use for which the power of eminent domain may be exercised.

**Sec. 51-5. Special tax sales; notice. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-101)**

The Township of Saddle Brook may hold special tax sales with respect to those properties eligible for tax sale pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-19 which are also on an abandoned property list established by the Township of Saddle Brook pursuant to Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-55). If the Township of Saddle Brook elects to hold a special tax sale, it shall conduct that sale subject to the following provisions:

- A. The Township of Saddle Brook shall establish criteria for eligibility to bid on properties at the sale, which may include, but shall not be limited to: documentation of the bidder's ability to rehabilitate or otherwise reuse the property consistent with Township plans and regulations; commitments by the bidder to rehabilitate or otherwise reuse the property consistent with Township plans and regulations; commitments by the bidder to take action to foreclose on the tax lien by a date certain; and such other criteria as the Township of Saddle Brook may determine are necessary to ensure that the properties to be sold will be rehabilitated or otherwise reused in a manner consistent with the public interest;
- B. The Township of Saddle Brook may establish minimum bid requirements for a special tax sale that may be less than the full amount of the taxes, interest and penalties due, the amount of such minimum bid to be at the sole discretion of the Township of Saddle Brook, in order to ensure that the properties to be sold will be rehabilitated or otherwise reused in a manner consistent with the public interest;
- C. The Township of Saddle Brook may combine properties into bid packages, and require that bidders place a single bid on each package, and reject any and all bids on individual properties that have been included in bid packages;
- D. The Township of Saddle Brook may sell properties subject to provisions that, if the purchaser fails to carry out any commitment that has been set forth as a condition of sale pursuant to Subsection A of this section or misrepresents any material qualification that has been established as a condition of eligibility to bid pursuant thereto, then the properties and any interest thereto acquired by the purchaser shall revert to the Township of Saddle Brook, and any amount paid by the purchaser to the Township of Saddle Brook at the special tax sale shall be forfeit to the Township;
- E. In the event there are two or more qualified bidders for any property or bid package in a special tax sale, the Township of Saddle Brook may designate the unsuccessful but qualified bidder whose bid was closest to the successful bid as an eligible purchaser;

- F. In the event that the purchaser of that property or bid package fails to meet any of the conditions of sale established by the Township of Saddle Brook pursuant to this section, and their interest in the property or properties reverts to the Township of Saddle Brook, the Township of Saddle Brook may subsequently designate the entity previously designated as an eligible purchaser as the winning bidder for the property or properties, and assign the tax sale certificates to that entity on the basis of that entity's bid at the special tax sale, subject to the terms and conditions of the special tax sale.
- G. The Township of Saddle Brook shall provide notice of a special tax sale pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-26. The notice shall include any special terms of sale established by the Township of Saddle Brook pursuant to Subsection B, C or D of this section. Nothing shall prohibit the Township of Saddle Brook from holding a special tax sale on the same day as a standard or accelerated tax sale.

#### **Sec. 51-6. Owner Removal from list.**

Removal of property from list of abandoned properties; remediation (from N.J.S.A. 55:19-57):

- A. An owner may remove a property from the list of abandoned properties prior to sale of the tax sale certificate by paying all taxes and Township liens due, including interest and penalties, and:
  - (1) By posting cash or a bond equal to the cost of remediating all conditions because of which the property has been determined to be abandoned pursuant to Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-55) and posting cash or a bond to cover the cost of any environmental cleanup required on the property, evidenced by a certification by a licensed engineer retained by the owner and reviewed and approved by the public officer stating that the cash or bond adequately covers the cost of the cleanup; or
  - (2) By demonstrating to the satisfaction of the public officer that the conditions rendering the property abandoned have been remediated in full; provided, however, that where the public officer finds that the owner is actively engaged in remediating the conditions because of which the property was determined to be abandoned pursuant to Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-55), as evidenced by significant rehabilitation activity on the property, the public officer may grant an extension of time of not more than 120 days for the owner to complete all work, during which time no further proceedings will be taken against the owner or the property.
- B. If the owner has posted cash or a bond in order to have a property removed from the abandoned property list and the conditions because of which the property was determined to be abandoned have not been fully remediated within one year of the date of posting the cash or bond, or, in the case of a property which requires a remediation of any known, suspected or threatened release of contaminants, if the owner has failed to enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Environmental Protection or an administrative consent order, as the case may be, or if an agreement or order is in effect but the owner has failed to perform the remediation in conformance with the agreement or order, then the cash or bond shall be forfeited to the Township, which shall use the cash or bond and any interest which has accrued thereon for the purpose of demolishing or rehabilitating the property or performing the environmental remediation. Any funds remaining after the property has been demolished, rehabilitated or cleaned up shall be returned to the owner.

### **Sec. 51-7. Removal of property from abandoned property list. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-103)**

If a property, which an entity other than the Township of Saddle Brook has purchased or taken assignment from the Township of Saddle Brook of a tax sale certificate, is placed on the abandoned property list, the property shall be removed from the list if the owner of the certificate pays all Township taxes and liens due on the property within 30 days after the property is placed on the list; provided, however, that if the owner of the certificate fails to initiate foreclosure proceedings within six months after the property was first placed on the list, the property shall be restored to the abandoned property list.

### **Sec. 51-8. Action to foreclose right of redemption.**

Acquisition of tax sale certificate for abandoned property; action to foreclose right of redemption (from N.J.S.A. 55:19-58):

- A. When a person other than the Township of Saddle Brook or the Authority or its subsidiaries acquires a tax sale certificate for a property on the abandoned property list at tax sale, the purchaser may institute an action to foreclose the right of redemption at any time after the expiration of six months following the date of the sale of the tax sale certificate.
- B. When the Township of Saddle Brook is the purchaser at tax sale of any property on the abandoned property list pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-34, or when the Authority or any of its subsidiaries acquires the tax sale certificate pursuant to subsection a of Section 37 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 54:5-104.34), an action to foreclose the right of redemption may be instituted in accordance with the provisions of subsection b. of N.J.S.A. 54:5-77.
- C. After the foreclosure action is instituted, the right to redeem shall exist and continue to exist until barred by the judgment of the Superior Court; provided, however, that no redemption shall be permitted except where the owner:
  - (1) Posts cash or a bond equal to the cost of remediating the conditions because of which the property was determined to be abandoned pursuant to Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-56), as determined by the court; or
  - (2) Demonstrates to the court that the conditions because of which the property was determined to be abandoned pursuant to Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-56) have been remedied in full.

### **Sec. 51-9. Final judgment.**

Entry of final judgment barring right of redemption; grounds for reopening judgment (from N.J.S.A. 55:19-59). Once a final judgment barring the right of redemption with respect to a property on the list of abandoned properties has been recorded, no court shall reopen such judgment at any time except on the grounds of lack of jurisdiction or fraud in the conduct of the action; in any such proceeding, the provisions of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-20 et al.) shall be construed liberally in favor of the purchaser, assignee or transferee of the tax sale certificate.

## **ARTICLE II**

### **Rehabilitation of Abandoned Properties**

#### **Sec. 51-10. Legislative findings and declarations.**

- A. Abandoned properties create a wide range of problems for the Township of Saddle Brook, fostering criminal activity, creating public health problems and otherwise diminishing the quality of life for residents and business operators in those areas.
- B. Abandoned properties diminish the property values of neighboring properties and have a negative effect on the quality of life of adjacent property owners, increasing the risk of property damage through arson and vandalism and discouraging neighborhood stability and revitalization.
- C. For these reasons, abandoned properties are presumptively considered to be nuisances, in view of their negative effects on nearby properties and the residents or users of those properties.
- D. The continued presence of abandoned properties in the Township of Saddle Brook acts as a significant barrier to the Township's continued progressive development and revitalization.
- E. The responsibility of a property owner to maintain a property in sound condition and prevent it from becoming a nuisance to others extends to properties which are not in use and "demolition by neglect," leading to the deterioration and loss of the property, or failure by an owner to comply with legitimate orders to demolish, stabilize or otherwise repair his or her property creates a presumption that the owner has abandoned the property.

#### **Sec. 51-11. Definitions.**

As used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

DEPARTMENT — The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.

LIENHOLDER or MORTGAGE HOLDER — Any person or entity holding a note, mortgage or other interest secured by the building or any part thereof.

OWNER — The holder or holders of title to an abandoned property.

PROPERTY — Any building or structure and the land appurtenant thereto.

PUBLIC OFFICER — The person designated by the Township of Saddle Brook pursuant to Section 3 of P.L. 1942, c. 112 (N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.5) or any officer of the Township of Saddle Brook qualified to carry out the responsibilities set forth in P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) and designated by the Mayor and Council of Saddle Brook.

QUALIFIED REHABILITATION ENTITY — An entity organized or authorized to do business under the New Jersey statutes, which shall have as one of its purposes the construction or rehabilitation of residential or nonresidential buildings, the provision of affordable housing, the restoration of abandoned property, the revitalization and improvement of urban neighborhoods, or similar purpose, and which shall be well qualified by virtue of its staff, professional consultants, financial resources, and prior activities set forth in P.L. 2003, c. 10 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) to carry out the rehabilitation of vacant buildings in urban area.

**Sec. 51-12. Abandoned property; criteria. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-81)**

- A. Except as provided in Section 6 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-83), any property that has not been legally occupied for a period of six months and which meets any one of the following additional criteria may be deemed to be abandoned property upon a determination by the public officer that:
- (1) The property is in need of rehabilitation in the reasonable judgment of the public officer, and no rehabilitation has taken place during that six-month period;
  - (2) Construction was initiated on the property and was discontinued prior to completion, leaving the building unsuitable for occupancy, and no construction has taken place for at least six months as of the date of a determination by the public officer pursuant to this section;
  - (3) At least one installment of property tax remains unpaid and delinquent on that property in accordance with Chapter 4 of Title 54 of the Revised Statutes as of the date of a determination by the public officer pursuant to this section; or
  - (4) The property has been determined to be a nuisance by the public officer in accordance with Section 5 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-82).
- B. A property which contains both residential and nonresidential space may be considered abandoned pursuant to P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) so long as 2/3 or more of the total net square footage of the building was previously legally occupied as residential space and none of the residential space has been legally occupied for at least six months at the time of the determination of abandonment by the public officer and the property meets the criteria of either Subsection A(1) or A(4) of this section.

**Sec. 51-13. Nuisance property; criteria. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-82)**

- A. A property may be determined to be a nuisance if:
- (1) The property has been found to be unfit for human habitation, occupancy or use pursuant to Section 1 of P.L. 1942, c. 112 (N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.3);
  - (2) The condition and vacancy of the property materially increases the risk of fire to the property and adjacent properties;
  - (3) The property is subject to unauthorized entry leading to potential health and safety hazards; the owner has failed to take reasonable and necessary measures to secure the property; or the Township of Saddle Brook has secured the property in order to prevent such hazards after the owner has failed to do so;
  - (4) The presence of vermin or the accumulation of debris, uncut vegetation or physical deterioration of the structure or grounds have created potential health and safety hazards and the owner has failed to take reasonable and necessary measures to remove the hazards; or
  - (5) The dilapidated appearance or other condition of the property materially affects the welfare, including the economic welfare, of the residents of the area in close proximity to the property, and the owner has failed to take reasonable and necessary measures to remedy the conditions.

- B. A public officer who determines a property to be a nuisance pursuant to Subsections A(2) through A(5) of this section shall follow the notification procedures set forth in P.L. 1942, c. 112 (N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.3 et seq.).

**Sec. 51-14. Property deemed not abandoned; criteria; certification of abandonment provided upon request. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-83)**

- A. If an entity other than the Township of Saddle Brook has purchased or taken assignment from the Township of a tax sale certificate on a property that has not been legally occupied for a period of six months, that property shall not be placed on the abandoned property list pursuant to Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-55) if: 1) the owner of the certificate has continued to pay all Township of Saddle Brook taxes and liens on the property in the tax year when due; and 2) the owner of the certificate takes action to initiate foreclosure proceedings within six months after the property is eligible for foreclosure pursuant to either subsection a. or subsection b. of N.J.S.A. 54:5-86, as appropriate, and diligently pursues foreclosure proceedings in a timely fashion thereafter.
- B. A property which is used on a seasonal basis shall be deemed to be abandoned only if the property meets any two of the additional criteria set forth in Section 4 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-81).
- C. A determination that a property is abandoned property under the provisions of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) shall not constitute a finding that the use of the property has been abandoned for purposes of municipal zoning or land use regulation.
- D. Upon the request of a purchaser or assignee of a tax sale certificate seeking to bar the right of redemption on an abandoned property pursuant to Subsection B of N.J.S.A. 54:5-86, the public officer or the Tax Collector shall, in a timely fashion, provide the requester with a certification that the property fulfills the definition of abandoned according to the criteria set forth in Sections 4 and 5 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-81 and N.J.S.A. 55:19-82).

**Sec. 51-15. Transfer of possession and control of abandoned property. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-84)**

- A. A summary action or otherwise to transfer possession and control of abandoned property in need of rehabilitation to the Township of Saddle Brook may be brought by the Township of Saddle Brook in the Superior Court in the county in which the property is situated. If the court shall find that the property is abandoned pursuant to Section 4 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-81) and the owner or party in interest has failed to submit and initiate a rehabilitation plan, then the court may authorize the Township of Saddle Brook to take possession and control of the property and develop a rehabilitation plan.
- B. The Township, after being granted possession and control, may commence and maintain those further proceedings for the conservation, protection or disposal of the property or any part thereof that are required to rehabilitate the property, necessary to recoup the cost and expenses of rehabilitation and for the sale of the property; provided, however, that the court shall not direct the sale of the property if the owner applies to the court for reinstatement of control of the property as provided in Section 15 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-92).

- C. Failure by the owner, mortgage holder or lienholder to submit plans for rehabilitation to the Township of Saddle Brook, obtain appropriate construction permits for rehabilitation or, in the alternative, submit formal applications for funding the cost of rehabilitation to local, state or federal agencies providing such funding within that six-month period shall be deemed prima facie evidence that the owner has failed to take any action to further the rehabilitation of the property.

**Sec. 51-16. Filing of complaint; required information. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-85)**

A complaint filed pursuant to Section 7 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-84) shall include:

- A. Documentation that the property is on the municipal abandoned property list or a certification by the public officer that the property is abandoned; and
- B. A statement by an individual holding appropriate professional qualifications that there are sound reasons that the building should be rehabilitated rather than demolished based upon the physical, aesthetic or historical character of the building or the relationship of the building to other buildings and lands within its immediate vicinity.

**Sec. 51-17. Filing of complaint; notice requirements; entry to secure, stabilize, repair or inspect the property. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-86)**

- A. Within 10 days of filing a complaint pursuant to P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.), the plaintiff shall file a notice of lis pendens with the county recording officer of the county within which the building is located.
- B. At least 30 days before filing the complaint, the Township of Saddle Brook shall serve a notice of intention to take possession of an abandoned building. The notice shall inform the owner and interested parties that the property has not been legally occupied for six months and of those criteria that led to a determination of abandonment pursuant to Section 4 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-81).
  - (1) The notice shall provide that unless the owner or a party in interest prepares and submits a rehabilitation plan to the appropriate Township of Saddle Brook officials, the Township of Saddle Brook will seek to gain possession of the building to rehabilitate the property and the associated cost shall be a lien against the property, which may be satisfied by the sale of the property, unless the owner applies to the court for reinstatement of control of the property as provided in Section 15 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-92).
  - (2) After the complaint is filed, the complaint shall be served on the parties in interest in accordance with the New Jersey Rules of Court.
- C. After serving the notice of intent pursuant to Subsection B of this section, the Township of Saddle Brook or its designee may enter upon that property after written notice to the owner by certified mail, return receipt requested, in order to secure, stabilize or repair the property, or in order to inspect the property for purposes of preparing the plan to be submitted to the court pursuant to Section 12 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-89).

**Sec. 51-18. Property owner, defense against complaint; requirements. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-87)**

- A. Any owner may defend against a complaint filed pursuant to Section 7 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-84) by submitting a plan for the rehabilitation and reuse of the property which is the subject of the complaint and by posting a bond equal to 125% of the amount determined by the public officer or the court to be the projected cost of rehabilitation. Any plan submitted by an owner to defend against a complaint shall be submitted within 60 days after the complaint has been filed, unless the court provides the owner with an extension of time for good cause shown.
- B. A plan submitted by an owner pursuant to this section shall include, but not be limited to:
  - (1) A detailed financial feasibility analysis, including documentation of the economic feasibility of the proposed reuse, including operating budgets or resale prices, or both, as appropriate;
  - (2) A budget for the rehabilitation of the property, including sources and uses of funds, based on the terms and conditions of realistically available financing, including grants and loans;
  - (3) A timetable for the completion of rehabilitation and reuse of the property, including milestones for performance of major steps leading to and encompassing the rehabilitation and reuse of the property; and
  - (4) Documentation of the qualifications of the individuals and firms that will be engaged to carry out the planning, design, financial packaging, construction, and marketing or rental of the property.
- C. Court approval.
  - (1) The court shall approve any plan that, in the judgment of the court, is realistic and likely to result in the expeditious rehabilitation and reuse of the property which is the subject of the complaint.
  - (2) If the court approves the owner's plan, then it may appoint the public officer to act as monitor of the owner's compliance. If the owner fails to carry out any step in the approved plan, then the Township of Saddle Brook may apply to the court to have the owner's bond forfeited, possession of the building transferred to the Township of Saddle Brook to complete the rehabilitation plan and authorization to use the bond proceeds for rehabilitation of the property.
  - (3) The owner shall provide quarterly reports to the Township of Saddle Brook on its activities and progress toward rehabilitation and reuse of the property. The owner shall provide those reports to the court on its activities that the court determines are necessary.
- D. The court may reject a plan and bond if it finds that the plan does not represent a realistic and expeditious means of ensuring the rehabilitation of the property or that the owner or his representatives or agents, or both, lack the qualifications, background or other criteria necessary to ensure that the plan will be carried out successfully.

**Sec. 51-19. Owner unsuccessful in defending against complaint; mortgage or lienholders to be designated in possession of property. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-88)**

- A. If an owner is unsuccessful in defending against a complaint filed pursuant to Section 7 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-84), the mortgage holder or lienholder may seek to be designated in possession of the property by submitting a plan and posting a bond meeting the same conditions as set forth in Section 10 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-87). The plan shall be submitted within 60 days after the court has rejected the owner's plan, unless the court provides the mortgage holder or lienholder with an extension of time for good cause shown. If the court approves any such mortgage holder's or lienholder's plan, it shall designate that party to be in possession of the property for purposes of ensuring its rehabilitation and reuse and may appoint the public officer to act as monitor of the party's compliance.
  - (1) The mortgage holder or lienholder, as the case may be, shall provide quarterly reports to the court and the Township of Saddle Brook on its activities and progress toward rehabilitation and reuse of the property.
  - (2) If the mortgage holder or lienholder fails to carry out any material step in the approved plan, then the public officer shall notify the court, which may order the bond forfeit, grant the Township of Saddle Brook possession of the property, and authorize the Township of Saddle Brook to use the proceeds of the bond for rehabilitation of the property.
- B. Any sums incurred or advanced for the purpose of rehabilitating the property by a mortgage holder or lienholder granted possession of a property pursuant to Subsection A of this section, including court costs and reasonable attorney's fees, may be added to the unpaid balance due that mortgage holder or lienholder, with interest calculated at the same rate set forth in the note or security agreement or, in the case of a tax lienholder, at the statutory interest rate for subsequent liens.

**Sec. 51-20. Township of Saddle Brook to be designated in possession of property; submission of plan to court. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-89)**

- A. If no mortgage holder or lienholder meets the conditions of Section 11 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-88), then the Township of Saddle Brook shall submit a plan to the court which conforms with the provisions of subsection b. of Section 10 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-87). The plan shall designate the entity which shall implement the plan, which may be the Township of Saddle Brook or that entity designated in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-90).
- B. The court shall grant the Township of Saddle Brook possession of the property if it finds that:
  - (1) The proposed rehabilitation and reuse of the property is appropriate and beneficial;
  - (2) The Township of Saddle Brook is qualified to undertake the rehabilitation and reuse of the property; and
  - (3) The plan submitted by the Township of Saddle Brook represents a realistic and timely plan for the rehabilitation and reuse of the property.
- C. The Township of Saddle Brook shall take all steps necessary and appropriate to further the rehabilitation and reuse of the property consistent with the plan submitted to the court. In making its findings pursuant to this section, the court may consult with qualified parties, including the Department of Community Affairs, and, upon request by a party in interest, may hold a hearing on the plan.

- D. Where either a redevelopment plan pursuant to P.L. 1992, c. 79 (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.) or a neighborhood revitalization plan pursuant to P.L. 2001, c. 415 (N.J.S.A. 52:27D-490 et seq.) has been adopted or approved by the Department of Community Affairs, as appropriate, encompassing the property which is the subject of a complaint, the court shall make a further finding that the proposed rehabilitation and reuse of the property are not inconsistent with any provision of either plan.

**Sec. 51-21. Township of Saddle Brook exercise of rights to further rehabilitation and reuse of property; designation of qualified rehabilitation entity. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-90)**

- A. The Township of Saddle Brook may exercise its rights under P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) directly, or may designate a qualified rehabilitation entity to act as its designee for the purpose of exercising the Township's rights where that designation will further the rehabilitation and reuse of the property consistent with Township's plans and objectives. This designation shall be made by resolution of the Mayor and the Council of the Township of Saddle Brook. The governing body or Mayor, as the case may be, may delegate this authority to the public officer.
- B. Regardless of whether the Township of Saddle Brook exercises its rights directly or designates a qualified rehabilitation entity pursuant to this section, while in possession of a property pursuant to P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.), the Township of Saddle Brook shall maintain, safeguard, and maintain insurance on the property. Notwithstanding the Township's possession of the property, nothing in P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) shall be deemed to relieve the owner of the property of any civil or criminal liability or any duty imposed by reason of acts or omissions of the owner.

**Sec. 51-22. Township deemed possessor of property; borrowing of funds; reporting and filing requirements. (N.J.S.A. 55:119-91)**

- A. If the Township of Saddle Brook has been granted possession of a property pursuant to Section 12 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-89), that Township shall be deemed to have an ownership interest in the property for the purpose of filing plans with public agencies and boards, seeking and obtaining construction permits and other approvals, and submitting applications for financing or other assistance to public or private entities.
  - (1) For the purposes of any state program of grants or loans, including but not limited to programs of the Department of Community Affairs and the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, possession of a property under this section shall be considered legal control of the property.
  - (2) Notwithstanding the granting of possession to the Township of Saddle Brook, nothing in P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) shall be deemed to relieve the owner of the property of any obligation the owner or any other person may have for the payment of taxes or other Township of Saddle Brook liens and charges, or mortgages or liens to any party, whether those taxes, charges or liens are incurred before or after the granting of possession.
  - (3) The granting of possession shall not suspend any obligation the owner may have as of the date of the granting of possession for payment of any operating or maintenance expense associated with the property, whether or not billed at the time of the granting of possession.

- B. The court may approve the borrowing of funds by the Township of Saddle Brook to rehabilitate the property and may grant a lien or security interests with priority over all other liens or mortgages other than municipal liens. Prior to granting this lien priority, the court shall find that: 1) the Township of Saddle Brook sought to obtain the necessary financing from the senior lienholder, which declined to provide such financing on reasonable terms; 2) the Township of Saddle Brook sought to obtain a voluntary subordination from the senior lienholder, which refused to provide such subordination; and 3) lien priority is necessary in order to induce another lender to provide financing on reasonable terms. No lien authorized by the court shall take effect unless recorded in the office of the clerk of the county in which the property is located. For the purposes of this section, the cost of rehabilitation shall include reasonable non-construction costs such as architectural fees or construction permit fees customarily included in the financing of the rehabilitation of residential property.
- C. Where the Township of Saddle Brook has been granted possession by the court in the name of the Township, the Township of Saddle Brook may seek the approval of the court to assign its rights to another entity, which approval shall be granted by the court when it finds that: 1) the entity to which the Township's rights will be assigned is a qualified rehabilitation entity; and 2) the assignment will further the purposes of this section.
- D. Where the Township of Saddle Brook has designated a qualified rehabilitation entity to act on its behalf, the qualified rehabilitation entity shall provide quarterly reports to the Township of Saddle Brook on its activities and progress toward rehabilitation and reuse of the property. The Township of Saddle Brook or qualified rehabilitation entity, as the case may be, shall provide such reports to the court as the court determines to be necessary. If the court finds that the Township of Saddle Brook or its designee have failed to take diligent action toward rehabilitation of the property within one year from the grant of possession, then the court may request the Township of Saddle Brook to designate another qualified rehabilitation entity to exercise its rights, or if the Township of Saddle Brook fails to do so, may terminate the order of possession and return the property to its owner.
- E. The Township of Saddle Brook shall file a notice of completion with the court, and shall also serve a copy on the owner and any mortgage holder or lienholder, at such time as the Township of Saddle Brook has determined that no more than six months remain to the anticipated date on which rehabilitation will be complete. This notice shall include an affidavit of the public officer attesting that rehabilitation can realistically be anticipated to be complete within that time period and a statement setting forth such actions as it plans to undertake to ensure that reuse of the property takes place consistent with the plan.

**Sec. 51-23. Petition for reinstatement of control and possession by owner. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-92)**

- A. An owner may petition for reinstatement of the owner's control and possession of the property at any time after one year from the grant of possession, but no later than 30 days after the Township of Saddle Brook has filed a notice of completion with the court or, in the event the notice of completion is filed within less than one year of the grant of possession, within 30 days after the Township of Saddle Brook has filed notice.
- B. The court may allow additional time for good cause if that additional time does not materially delay completion of the rehabilitation, place undue hardship on the Township of Saddle Brook, or affect any of the terms or conditions under which the Township of Saddle Brook has applied for or received financing for the rehabilitation of the property.

**Sec. 51-24. Contents of petition; filing and payment requirements. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-93)**

Any petition for reinstatement of the owner's control and possession of the property filed pursuant to Section 15 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-92) shall:

- A. Include a plan for completion of the rehabilitation and reuse of the property consistent with the plan previously approved by the court;
- B. Provide legally binding assurances that the owner will comply with all conditions of any grant or loan secured by the Township of Saddle Brook or repay those grants or loans in full, at the discretion of the maker of the loan or grant; and
- C. Be accompanied by payment equal to the sum of:
  - (1) All Township liens outstanding on the property;
  - (2) All costs incurred by the Township of Saddle Brook in bringing action with respect to the property;
  - (3) Any costs incurred by the Township of Saddle Brook not covered by grants or loans to be assumed or repaid pursuant to this section; and
  - (4) Any costs remaining to complete rehabilitation and reuse of the property, as determined by the public officer, which payment shall be placed in escrow with the Clerk of the Court pending disposition of the petition.

**Sec. 51-25. Obligations of owner prior to grant of petition. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-94)**

- A. Prior to the granting of a petition on the part of the owner by the court pursuant to Section 15 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-92), the owner may be required to post a bond or other security in an amount determined by the court, after consultation with the public officer, as likely to ensure that the owner will continue to maintain the property in sound condition. That bond or other security shall be made available to the Township of Saddle Brook to make any repair on the property in the event of a code violation which is not corrected in timely fashion by the owner. The bond or other security may be forfeited in full in the event that the owner fails to comply with any requirement imposed as a condition of the reinstatement petition filed pursuant to Section 15 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-92).
- B. The owner may seek approval of the court to be relieved of this requirement after five years, which shall be granted if the court finds that the owner has maintained the property in good repair during that period, that no material violations affecting the health and safety of the tenants have occurred during that period, and that the owner has remedied other violations in a timely and expeditious fashion.

**Sec. 51-26. Failure of owner to petition for reinstatement of control and possession of property; granting of title to the Township; authority to sell. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-95)**

If the owner fails to petition for the reinstatement of control and possession of the property within 30 days after the entity in possession has filed a notice of completion or in any event within two years after the initial grant of possession, or if the owner fails to meet any conditions that may be set by the court in granting a reinstatement petition filed pursuant to Section 15 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-92), upon petition from the entity in possession, the court may grant the

Township of Saddle Brook title or authorize the Township of Saddle Brook to sell the property, subject to the provisions of Section 19 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-96).

**Sec. 51-27. Procedure of Township seeking to gain title to property; authorization to sell; proceeds. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-96)**

- A. Where the Township of Saddle Brook seeks to gain title to the property, it shall purchase the property for fair market value on such terms as the court shall approve and may place the proceeds of sale in escrow with the court.
  - (1) The court may authorize the Township of Saddle Brook to sell the building free and clear of liens, claims and encumbrances, in which event all such liens, claims and encumbrances shall be transferred to the proceeds of sale with the same priority as existed prior to resale in accordance with the provisions of this section, except that municipal liens shall be paid at settlement.
  - (2) The proceeds of the purchase of the property shall be distributed as set forth in Section 20 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-97).
- B. The Township of Saddle Brook may seek approval of the court to sell the property to a third party when the court finds that such conveyance will further the effective and timely rehabilitation and reuse of the property.
- C. Upon approval by the court, the Township of Saddle Brook shall sell the property on such terms and at such price as the court shall approve, and may place the proceeds of sale in escrow with the court. The court shall order a distribution of the proceeds of sale after paying court costs in the order of priority set forth in Section 20 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-97).

**Sec. 51-28. Distribution of proceeds. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-97)**

The proceeds paid pursuant to subsection c of Section 19 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-96) shall be distributed in the following order of priority:

- A. The costs and expenses of sale;
- B. Other governmental liens;
- C. Repayment of principal and interest on any borrowing or indebtedness incurred by the Township of Saddle Brook and granted priority lien status pursuant to subsection a of Section 21 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-98);
- D. A reasonable development fee to the Township of Saddle Brook consistent with the standards for development fees established for rehabilitation programs by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs or the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency;
- E. Other valid liens and security interests, in accordance with their priority; and
- F. The owner.

**Sec. 51-29. Public officer; authority to place lien on property; remedies. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-98)**

- A. The public officer, with the approval of the court, may place a lien on the property to cover any costs of the Township of Saddle Brook in connection with a proceeding under P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) incurred prior to the grant by the court of an order of possession under P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.), which may include costs incurred to stabilize or secure the property to ensure that it can be rehabilitated in a cost-effective manner. Any such lien shall be considered a Township lien for the purposes of N.J.S.A. 54:5-9 with the rights and status of a Township lien pursuant thereto.
- B. With the exception of the holding of special tax sales pursuant to Section 24 of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-101), the remedies available under P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) shall be available to the Township of Saddle Brook with respect to any abandoned property, whether or not the Township of Saddle Brook has established an abandoned property list as provided in Section 36 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-55) and whether or not the property has been included on any such list.

**Sec. 51-30. Court's denial of rights and remedies to lienholders and mortgage holders. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-99)**

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.), a court may in its discretion deny a lienholder or mortgage holder any or all rights or remedies afforded lienholders and mortgage holders under P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.), if the court finds that the owner of a property subject to any of the provisions of P.L. 2003, c. 210 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et al.) owns or controls more than a fifty-percent interest in, or effective control of, the lienholder or mortgage holder or that the familial or business relationship between the lienholder or mortgage holder and the owner precludes a separate interest on the part of the lienholder or mortgage holder.

**Sec. 51-31. Recourse of Township against individuals or corporations. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-100)**

With respect to any lien placed against any real property pursuant to the provisions of Section 1 or Section 3 of P.L. 1942, c. 112 (N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.3 or N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.5) or Section 1 of P.L. 1989, c. 91 (N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.3a) or any receiver's lien pursuant to P.L. 2003, c. 295 (N.J.S.A. 2A:42-114 et al.), the Township of Saddle Brook shall have recourse with respect to the lien against any asset of the owner of the property, if an individual; against any asset of any partner, if a partnership; and against any asset of any owner of a ten-percent interest or greater, if the owner is any other business organization or entity recognized pursuant to law.

**Sec. 51-32. Eminent domain proceedings; establishment of fair market value. (N.J.S.A. 55:19-102)**

With respect to any eminent domain proceeding carried out under Section 37 of P.L. 1996, c. 62 (N.J.S.A. 55:19-56), the fair market value of the property shall be established on the basis of an analysis which determines independently:

- A. The cost to rehabilitate and reuse the property for such purpose as is appropriate under existing planning and zoning regulations governing its reuse or to demolish the existing property and construct a new building on the site, including all costs ancillary to rehabilitation such as, but not limited to, marketing and legal costs;
- B. The realistic market value of the reused property after rehabilitation or new construction, taking into account the market conditions particular to the neighborhood or subarea of the Township of Saddle Brook in which the property is located; and
- C. The extent to which the cost exceeds or does not exceed the market value after rehabilitation, or demolition and new construction, and the extent to which any "as is" value of the property prior to rehabilitation can be added to the cost of rehabilitation or demolition and new construction without the resulting combined cost exceeding the market value as separately determined. If the appraisal finds that the cost of rehabilitation or demolition and new construction, as appropriate, exceeds the realistic market value after rehabilitation or demolition and new construction, there shall be a rebuttable presumption in all proceedings under this subsection that the fair market value of the abandoned property is zero, and that no compensation is due the owner.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **Abandoned Property Registration Program**

#### **Sec. 51-33. Findings and declarations.**

- A. Foreclosure continues to be an issue confronting residents and municipalities.
- B. Properties in foreclosure proceedings can involve properties that are vacant and abandoned or have an increased risk of becoming vacant and abandoned during the foreclosure proceeding.
- C. Vacant and abandoned properties in foreclosure create a greater risk of blight and can create a wide range of problems for the communities in which they are located, including criminal activity, public health problems, depressed property values, reduced tax revenues, and diminished quality of life.
- D. The Legislature has recognized that municipalities must possess tools to identify properties in foreclosure, monitor their status, and mitigate the risk that they become vacant and abandoned, resulting in blight. The Legislature has also recognized the impact on municipal budgets associated with identifying, monitoring, and mitigating these problems.
- E. Existing antiblight statutes do not provide a uniform and comprehensive mechanism for municipalities to identify, monitor, and mitigate the risks of vacant and abandoned properties in foreclosure.
- F. To provide such a mechanism, the Legislature enacted P.L. 2021, c. 444, to establish a uniform property registration system to enable municipalities to identify, monitor, and address the risk of blight created by properties on which foreclosure proceedings have been initiated or such properties that have become vacant and abandoned.

**Sec. 51-34. Statutory authority.**

- A. This article is enacted pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.12s3 which permits municipalities to enact ordinances to:
- (1) Create a property registration program for the purposes of identifying and monitoring residential and commercial properties within the municipality for which a summons and complaint in an action to foreclose on a mortgage has been filed;
  - (2) Regulate the care, maintenance, security, and upkeep of the exterior of vacant and abandoned residential and commercial properties for which a summons and complaint in an action to foreclose has been filed; and
  - (3) Impose property registration fees on the creditor of residential or commercial properties on an annual or semiannual basis.
- B. This article shall be interpreted and enforced in accordance with the fullest extent of the authority granted to municipalities under P.L. 2021, c. 444, and any subsequent amendments or supplements thereto.
- C. To the extent that any provision of this chapter conflicts with P.L. 2021, c. 444, the latter shall control.

**Sec. 51-35. Definitions.**

As used in this article, the following words, terms and their derivations shall have the following meanings unless their use in the text of this article clearly demonstrates a different meaning or references another provision of the Township Code, or a statute or regulation.

**CREDITOR** — A mortgagee or an agent or assignee of a mortgagee, such as the servicer, who has filed a complaint in the Superior Court seeking to foreclose upon a residential or commercial mortgage. If the entity seeking to foreclose upon the residential or commercial mortgage changes as a result of an assignment, transfer, or otherwise after the filing of the foreclosure complaint in the Superior Court, the new entity shall be deemed the creditor for the purposes of this article. For the purposes of this article, a creditor shall not include the State of New Jersey; a political subdivision of the state; a state, county, or local government entity, or their agent or assignee, such as a servicer.

**VACANT AND ABANDONED PROPERTY** —

- A. A property that is not legally occupied by mortgagor or tenant, which is in such condition that it cannot be legally reoccupied because of the presence or finding of at least two of the following conditions:
- (1) Overgrown or neglected vegetation;
  - (2) Accumulation of newspapers, circulars, flyers, or mail on the property;
  - (3) Disconnected gas, electric, or water utility services to the property;
  - (4) The accumulation of hazardous, noxious, or unhealthy substances or materials on the property;

- (5) The accumulation of junk, litter, trash, or debris on the property;
  - (6) The absence of window treatments, such as blinds, curtains, or shutters;
  - (7) The absence of furnishings or personal items;
  - (8) Statements of neighbors, delivery persons, or government employees indicating that the property is vacant and abandoned;
  - (9) Windows or entrances to the property that are boarded up or closed off, or multiple window panes that are damaged, broken, and unrepaired;
  - (10) Doors to the property that are smashed through, broken off, unhinged, or continuously locked;
  - (11) A risk to the health, safety, or welfare of the public or any adjoining or adjacent property owners due to acts of vandalism, loitering, criminal conduct, or the physical destruction or deterioration of the property;
  - (12) An uncorrected violation of a municipal building, housing, or similar code during the preceding year, or an order by municipal authorities declaring the property to be unfit for occupancy and to remain vacant and unoccupied;
  - (13) The mortgagee or other authorized party has secured or winterized the property due to the property being deemed vacant and unprotected or in danger of freezing;
  - (14) A written statement issued by a mortgagor expressing the clear intent of all mortgagors to abandon the property; or
  - (15) Any other reasonable indicia of abandonment.
- B. Except that for purposed of this article, a residential property shall not be considered "vacant and abandoned" if, on the property:
- (1) There is an unoccupied building which is undergoing construction, renovation, or rehabilitation that is proceeding diligently to completion, and the building is in compliance with all applicable ordinances, codes, regulations, and statutes;
  - (2) There is a building occupied on a seasonal basis, but otherwise secure; or
  - (3) There is a building that is secure, but is the subject of a probate action, action to quiet title, or other ownership dispute.

**Sec. 51-36. Property registration program.**

- A. There is hereby established a property registration program for the purposes of identifying and monitoring residential and commercial properties within the municipality for which a summons and complaint in an action to foreclose on a mortgage has been filed.
- B. A creditor filing a summons and complaint in an action to foreclose must, in addition to the notices provided to the Township pursuant to N.J.S.A. 46:10B-51 and N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.12s2 and Article III of this chapter, also register the residential or commercial property with the enforcement official as a property in foreclosure.

- C. The registration must include the following:
  - (1) Information regarding the creditor required pursuant to N.J.S.A. 46:10B-51a(1) and N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.12s2a(1) and § 51-36B.
  - (2) Information regarding the filed summons and complaint in foreclosure, including: a) the filing date; b) the court in which it was filed; and c) the docket number of the filing. Provided that it provides this information, a copy of the summons and complaint will satisfy this provision.
  - (3) A statement that the property qualifies as vacant and abandoned as defined pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.12s3b(8); and § 51-40.
- D. If, following the filing of the summons and complaint in foreclosure, there is any change in the name, address, or telephone number for a representative, agent, or individual authorized to accept service on behalf of a creditor required to register hereunder, the property registration must be updated within 10 days of such changes.
- E. If a registered property becomes vacant and abandoned, as defined pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.12s3b(8) and § 51-40, after the initial registration, the registration must be updated to reflect this change in status.
- F. Out-of-state creditors must appoint an in-state representative or agent to act for the foreclosing creditor and to accept service of summonses and notices of violation.

**Sec. 51-37. Property registration fees.**

- A. Creditors required to register properties pursuant to this chapter are subject to the following fees:
  - (1) A fee of \$500 per property annually for any property required to be registered because a summons and complaint have been filed in an action by the creditor to foreclose.
  - (2) An additional fee of \$2,000 per property annually if the property is vacant and abandoned, as defined pursuant to § 51-40, when the summons and complaint in an action to foreclose is filed, or becomes vacant and abandoned at any time thereafter while the property is in foreclosure.
- B. Property registration fees are due and payable upon filing of the required notice and thereafter on or before January 1 of each year.
- C. Property registration fees shall be considered a municipal charge pursuant to the Tax Sale Law, N.J.S.A. 54:5-1 et seq.
- D. Late and unpaid property registration fees are subject to interest pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:4-67.

**Sec. 51-38. Property maintenance.**

- A. A creditor filing a summons and complaint in an action to foreclose is responsible for the care, maintenance, security, and upkeep of the exterior of any property that is or becomes vacant and abandoned while registered in the property registration program.

- B. The duties and obligations imposed upon creditors pursuant to Subsection A include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - (1) Compliance with the provisions of Chapter 197, Property Maintenance, of the Code of the Township of Saddle Brook.
  - (2) Compliance with any and all other applicable provisions of the Township Code.
- C. Creditors, or authorized agents, of vacant and abandoned properties registered hereunder must provide the Township with reasonable access thereto for the purpose of conducting interior and exterior inspections to determine compliance with this section. The Township shall provide reasonable notice of such inspections, which will be carried out during regular business hours, or at such other times as circumstances warrant or as agreed to by the parties.

**Sec. 51-39. Enforcement.**

- A. The provisions of this article shall be enforceable by the Construction Official and/or Property Maintenance Official, or any such other authorized officer or employee of the municipality authorized to enforce the provisions of the Township Code, all of whom, unless otherwise specified by ordinance or state law, shall be considered the "enforcement official" for purposes of this Article III.
- B. Upon a determination that a creditor has violated this chapter, the enforcement official is empowered to issue notices of violation. In cases where the charge is failure to provide care, maintenance, security, and upkeep of the exterior of vacant and abandoned property, such notices shall require that the violation be corrected within 30 days of receipt, or within 10 days of receipt if the violation presents an imminent threat to public health and safety.

**Sec. 51-40. Fines and penalties.**

- A. An out-of-state creditor found by the Municipal Court, or other court of competent jurisdiction, to be in violation of the requirement set forth in § 51-36F to appoint an in-state representative shall be subject to a fine of \$2,500 for each day of the violation. These fines shall commence on the first day after the close of the ten-day period, set forth N.J.S.A. 46:10B-51; P.L. 2021, c. 444, § 51-36D, Article III of this chapter, for providing notice to the Municipal Clerk that a summons and complaint in an action to foreclose on a mortgage has been served.
- B. A creditor found by the Municipal Court, or other court of competent jurisdiction, to be in violation of any other provision of this article, except for the violation covered under the preceding subsection, shall be subject to a fine of \$1,500 for each day of the violation. Any fines imposed pursuant to this subsection shall commence 31 days following receipt of the notice of violation, except in cases where the violation presents an imminent risk to public health and safety, in which case any fines shall commence 11 days following receipt of the notice.

**Sec. 51-41. Exemption for federally administered and federally serviced properties.**

Notwithstanding any other contrary provisions of this chapter, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and any loan servicers acting on their behalf are exempt from payment of any registration fee for any property registered under this chapter as well as from payment of any fines or penalties otherwise permitted to be assessed under this chapter or any other provision of the Township Code.

Approved:

TOWNSHIP OF SADDLE BROOK

ATTEST:

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Peter Lo Dico, RMC, CMC  
Township Clerk

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David Gierek, Council President

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Robert D. White, Mayor

Introduced: June 19, 2025

Adopted: