

**TOWNSHIP OF ANDOVER
SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

ORDINANCE NO. 2017-04

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF ANDOVER, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF
NEW JERSEY TO AMEND THE TOWNSHIP CODE BY AMENDING CURRENT CHAPTER 122
"PROPERTY, ABANDONED"**

WHEREAS, the Township has received complaints regarding vacant properties that are being permitted by the owners to fall into disrepair; and

WHEREAS, the poor and/or declining condition of these residences creates a dangerous condition for the residents of Andover Township; and

WHEREAS, the cost of maintaining and/or repairing these properties is to be borne by the owner of the property; and

WHEREAS, in light of the number of complaints received relating to the condition of abandoned and vacant properties, the Township Committee reviewed the matter; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee has determined that it is in the Township's best interest to amend the Code to properly address vacant and abandoned properties and to ensure that the Township has the proper authority to take necessary action pursuant to the Abandoned Property Rehabilitation Act.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Andover, in the County of Sussex, and State of New Jersey as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 122 "Property, Abandoned," is amended as follows and further amended and supplemented as follows:

§122-1 Definitions.

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

ABANDONED PROPERTY

Any property that is determined to be abandoned pursuant to P.L. 2003, N.J.S.A. 55:19-81.

BUILDING

Any building, or structure, or part thereof, whether used for human habitation or otherwise, and includes any outbuildings, and appurtenances belonging thereto.

INTERESTED PARTIES

Includes any resident of the Township of Andover, any owner or operator of a business within the Township of Andover, or any organization representing the interests of residents, business owners or otherwise engaged in furthering the revitalization and improvement of the neighborhood in which the property is located.

LIENHOLDER or MORTGAGE HOLDER

Any person or entity holding a note, mortgage, or other interest secured by a building or any part thereof.

OWNER

The holder or holders of title in fee simple.

PROPERTY

Any building or structure and the land appurtenant thereto.

PUBLIC OFFICER

A person designated or appointed by the Township Committee pursuant to P.L. 1942, N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.5, or any officer of the municipality qualified to carry out the responsibilities set forth in N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et seq. as designated by resolution of the Township Committee.

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 to carry out the rehabilitation of vacant buildings, as set forth under N.J.S.A. 55:19-80.

§122-2 Abandoned Property Rehabilitation Act.

The Township of Andover does hereby adopt and enact all provisions of the Abandoned Property Rehabilitation Act, N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et seq.

§ 122-3 Abandoned property criteria.

- A. Except as provided in 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 Township Committee that:
- (1) The property is in need of rehabilitation in the reasonable judgment of the Township Committee and no rehabilitation has taken place during that same six-month period; or
 - (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 Township Committee pursuant to this section;
 - (3) At least one installment of property tax remains unpaid and delinquent on that property as of the date of a determination by the Township Committee pursuant to this section; or
 - (4) The property has been determined to be a nuisance by the Township Committee in accordance with N.J.S.A. 55:19-82 for one (1) or more of the following reasons:
 - (a) The property has been found to be unfit for human habitation, occupancy or use pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.3;

- (b) The condition and vacancy of the property materially increases the risk of fire to the property and adjacent properties;
- (c) 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 municipality has secured the property in order to prevent such hazards after the owner has failed to do so;
- (d) 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
- (e) 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 property which contains both residential and nonresidential space may be considered abandoned pursuant to N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 *et seq.*, 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 Township Committee.

§ 122-4 Designation of public officer.

Pursuant to Section 3 of P.L. 1942, c. 112, the Township Committee is hereby designated as the public officer for the purpose of carrying out the responsibilities established by this chapter and shall have all the responsibilities established by this chapter and shall have all the responsibilities and powers provided by all applicable laws.

§ 122-6 Establishment of abandoned property list.

- A. The Township Committee shall identify abandoned property within the Township of Andover for the purpose of establishing an abandoned property list. The abandoned property list shall include, for each abandoned property identified, the tax block and lot number, the name of the owner of record, if known, and the street address of the lot. The Township Committee may add properties to the abandoned property list at any time and may delete properties at any time when it finds that the property no longer meets the definition of an abandoned property.
- 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 Andover 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 if the owner of the certificate pays all municipal 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 in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 55:19-103.
- C. The Township Committee shall establish the abandoned property list and any additions or

deletions thereto by authorizing the publication of the list in the official newspaper of the Township of Andover, 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 Township Committee, 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 N.J.S.A. 54:4-64(d). 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 N.J.S.A. 40:48-2.7. The mailed notice shall indicate the factual basis for the Township Committee's finding that the property is abandoned property, as that term is defined herein and in N.J.S.A. 55:19-54, and shall specify 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 Township Committee in the office of the Sussex County Clerk. This filing shall have the same force and effect as a formal notice under N.J.S.A. 2A:15-6. The notice shall be captioned with the name of the Township of Andover as plaintiff and the name of the property owner as defendant, 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 by appealing that determination to the Township Committee 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 Township Committee 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 Township Committee 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, the Township Committee 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 asserting that the property is not an abandoned property, 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, 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 herein and in N.J.S.A. 55:19-54. The Township Committee 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 Township Committee pursuant to Subsection D of this section, by instituting, in accordance with the New Jersey Court Rules, a summary trial proceeding in the Superior Court, Sussex County. Such action shall be instituted within 20 days of the date of the notice of decision mailed by the Township Committee. The sole ground for appeal and new hearing before the Superior Court shall be that the property in question is not an abandoned property as that term is defined in 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 Township Committee shall promptly remove any property from the abandoned property list that has been determined by it or on appeal not to be abandoned and may, in its discretion, remove properties from said list whenever it deems such removal appropriate under the circumstances.
- G. The abandoned property list shall become effective, and the Township of Andover shall have the right to pursue any legal remedy with respect to properties on the list, at any time after at least one property has been placed on the list and following the expiration of the period for appeal with respect to that first property or upon the denial of an appeal brought by the property owner of that first property.

§ 122-6 Interested parties may request additions to abandoned property list.

- A. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 55:19-105, any interested party may submit a written request to the Township Committee asserting that any property within the Township of Andover should be included on the abandoned property list. The written request must specify the street address and block and lot number of the property to be included and the grounds for its inclusion. Within 30 days of receipt of any such request, the Township Committee shall provide a written response to the party, either indicating that the property will be added to the list or, if not, the reasons for not adding the property. For the purposes of this section, the term "interested parties" shall include any resident of the Township of Andover, any owner or operator of a business within the Township of Andover or any organization representing the interests of residents, business owners or otherwise engaged in furthering the revitalization and improvement of the neighborhood in which the property is located.
- B. Any interested party may participate in a redetermination hearing regarding the inclusion of a property on the abandoned property list. Upon written request by any interested party, the Township Committee shall provide that party with at least 20 days' notice of any such hearing. The party shall provide the Township Committee with notice at least 10 days before the hearing of its intention to participate and the nature of the testimony or other information that it proposes to submit at the hearing.

§ 122-7 Removal of property from abandoned property list.

- A. An owner may request removal of his/her property from the abandoned property list 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 N.J.S.A. 55:19-55 and by 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 Township Committee, stating that the cash or bond adequately covers the cost of the cleanup; or
 - (2) By demonstrating to the satisfaction of the Township Committee that the conditions rendering the property abandoned have been remediated in full; provided, however, that where the Township Committee finds that the owner is actively engaged in remediating the conditions because of which the property was determined to be abandoned, as evidenced by significant rehabilitation activity on the property, the Township Committee 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 New Jersey 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.

§ 122-8 Sale of restricted tax liens.

- A. Notwithstanding the provisions of 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 for six or more quarters as of the date of expiration of the right to appeal the property's 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 of 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.
- B. The Township of Andover 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 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 Township Committee may waive a requirement to post a bond imposed by the Township for any purchaser, assignee or transferee of a tax sale certificate that provides documentation acceptable to the Township Committee that the purchaser, assignee or transferee is a qualified rehabilitation entity as defined in 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 in effect for the time period when the amounts were expended, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:4-67. The tax sale certificate purchaser, assignee or transferee, with the authority of the Township of Andover, 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 Andover harmless, has been filed with the Township Committee.
- C. If the Township of Andover 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 notice pursuant to N.J.S.A. 55:19-55, the Township 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 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 Andover in order to ensure performance. The amount and conditions of the bond shall be determined by the Township Committee.

- D. The cost of remediation incurred by the Township of Andover, 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, except for Township taxes, liens and assessments and any lien imposed pursuant to the Spill Compensation and Control Act, 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 Sussex County Clerk.
- E. The clearance, development, redevelopment, or repair of property being maintained as an abandoned property pursuant to this chapter shall be considered a public purpose and public use for which the power of eminent domain may be lawfully exercised.

§ 122-9 Special tax sale; criteria for bidders.

- A. The Township of Andover 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 the abandoned property list.
- B. The Township Committee shall establish criteria for eligibility to bid on properties at the sale which may include, but need not be limited to:
 - (1) 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;
 - (2) Commitments by the bidder to take action to foreclose on the tax lien by a date certain; and
 - (3) Such other criteria as the Township Committee 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.
- C. The Township Committee may establish minimum bid requirements for a special tax sale that are less than the full amount of the taxes, interest and penalties due to help ensure that the properties will be rehabilitated or otherwise utilized in a manner consistent with the public interest.
- D. The Township Committee may combine properties in said special tax sale into bid packages and require that bidders place a single bid on each package, rejecting any and all bids on individual properties that are submitted.

- E. The Township Committee may sell said properties subject to the provision that, if the purchaser fails to carry out any commitment that has been set forth as a condition of sale 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, and any amount paid by the purchaser at the special tax sale shall be forfeit to the Township.
- F. In the event there are two or more qualified bidders for any property or bid package in a special tax sale, the Township may designate the unsuccessful qualified bidder whose bid was closest to the successful bid as an eligible purchaser. In the event that the selected purchaser of that property or bid package fails to meet any of the conditions of sale established by the Township and his/her interest in the property or properties reverts to the Township, the Township 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 Andover 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 pursuant to this section. Nothing shall prohibit the Township from holding a special tax sale on the same day as a standard or accelerated tax sale.

§ 122-10 Expedited action to foreclose right of redemption.

- A. When a person or entity other than the Township of Andover 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 just six months following the date of the sale of the tax sale certificate.
- B. When the Township of Andover is the purchaser at tax sale of any property on the abandoned property list pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-34, 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 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 have been remedied in full.

§ 122-11 Abandoned property status during expedited foreclosure.

- A. If an entity other than the Township of Andover 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 added to the abandoned property list under the following limited circumstances:
 - (1) The owner of the certificate has continued to pay all Township 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 used on a seasonal basis shall be deemed abandoned only if it meets any two of the additional criteria set forth in N.J.S.A. 55:19-81.
- C. A determination that a property is abandoned property, under the provisions of this chapter and N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et seq., 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 Township Committee or the Tax Collector shall, in a timely fashion, provide the requester with a certification that the property fulfills the definition of an abandoned property according to the criteria established in N.J.S.A. 55:19-81 and N.J.S.A. 55:19-82.

§ 122-12 Summary action for control and possession of abandoned property.

- A. A summary action or other action to transfer possession and control of abandoned property in need of rehabilitation to the Township of Andover may be brought by the Township in the Superior Court, Sussex County. If the Court shall find that the property is abandoned pursuant to N.J.S.A. 55:19-81, and that the owner or party in interest has failed to submit and initiate a rehabilitation plan, then the Court may authorize the Township to take possession and control of the property and to develop its own rehabilitation plan for the property.
- B. Where the Township has been granted possession and control, the Township 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, 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 and possession of the property as permitted by N.J.S.A. 55:19-92.
- C. Failure by the owner, mortgage holder or lienholder to submit a plan for rehabilitation to the Township, 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 the initial six-month period, shall be deemed clear *prima facie* evidence that the owner has failed to take any action to further the rehabilitation of the property.
- D. A complaint filed pursuant to section N.J.S.A. 55:19-84 and Subsection A of this section shall include:
 - (1) Documentation that the property is on the municipal abandoned property list or a certification by the public officer that the property is abandoned; and
 - (2) 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.

- E. Within ten (10) days of filing a complaint, the plaintiff shall file a notice of *lis pendens* with the County of Sussex recording officer.
- (1) At least thirty (30) days before filing the complaint, the Township 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 (6) months and of those criteria that led to a determination of abandonment pursuant to N.J.S.A. 55:19-81.
 - (2) The notice shall provide that unless the owner or a party in interest prepares and submits a rehabilitation plan to the appropriate Township officials, the Township 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 N.J.S.A. §5:19-92.
 - (3) After the complaint is filed, the complaint shall be served on the parties in interest in accordance with the New Jersey Rules of Court.
 - (4) After serving the notice of intention pursuant to this subsection, the Township 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 N.J.S.A. 55:19-89.
- F. An owner may defend against a complaint filed pursuant to 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 Township Committee or the Court to be the projected cost of rehabilitation.
- G. 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. 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.

- H. 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.
- (1) 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 may apply to the court to have the owner's bond forfeited, possession of the building transferred to the Township to complete the rehabilitation plan and authorization to use the bond proceeds for rehabilitation of the property.
 - (2) The owner shall provide quarterly reports to the Township 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.
 - (3) 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.
- I. Where the Court approves the rehabilitation plan of the owner or other party in interest, then it may appoint the Township Committee to act as monitor of compliance and progress. If the owner fails to carry out any step in the approved plan, then the Township may apply to the Court to have the posted bond forfeited, to transfer possession of the building to the Township to complete the rehabilitation plan, and to grant authorization to use the bond proceeds for the rehabilitation. The owner or other party in interest shall provide bimonthly reports to the Township Committee on its activities and progress toward rehabilitation and reuse of the property.
- J. If an owner is unsuccessful in defending against a complaint filed pursuant to 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 N.J.S.A. 55:19-87. The plan must be submitted within 60 days following the Court's rejection of 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 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 Township Committee to act as monitor of the party's compliance. The mortgage holder or lien holder, as the case may be, shall provide quarterly reports to the court and the Township on its activities and progress toward rehabilitation and reuse of the property.
- K. The mortgage holder or lienholder, as the case may be, shall provide bimonthly reports to the Court and the Township Committee on its activities and progress toward rehabilitation and reuse of the property. If the mortgage holder or lienholder fails to carry out any material step in the approved plan, then the Township Committee shall notify the Court which may order the posted bond forfeit, grant the Township possession of the property, and authorize the Township to use the proceeds of the bond for rehabilitation of the property.
- L. Any sums incurred or advanced for the purpose of rehabilitating the property by a mortgage holder or lienholder granted possession of a property, including court costs and

reasonable attorney's fees, may be added to the unpaid balance due to 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.

- J. If no mortgage holder or lienholder meets the conditions of N.J.S.A. 55:19-88, then the Township may submit a plan to the Court which conforms with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 55:19-87. Such plan shall designate whether the Township or a qualified rehabilitation entity shall undertake the rehabilitation plan in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 55:19-90.

§ 122-13 Township rehabilitation or designation of qualified rehabilitation entity.

- A. The court shall grant the Township possession of the property if it finds that:
- (1) The proposed rehabilitation and reuse of the property is appropriate and beneficial;
 - (2) The Township is qualified to undertake the rehabilitation and reuse of the property; and
 - (3) The plan submitted by the Township represents a realistic and timely plan for the rehabilitation and reuse of the property.
- B. The Township 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.
- C. The Township Committee may designate a qualified rehabilitation entity for the purpose of exercising the Township's rights where that designation will further the rehabilitation and reuse of the property consistent with Township plans and objectives.
- D. Regardless of whether the Township exercises its rights directly or the Township Committee designates a qualified rehabilitation entity pursuant to this section, while in possession of a property the Township shall maintain, safeguard, and maintain insurance on the property. Notwithstanding the Township's possession of the property, the owner of the property shall not be relieved of any civil or criminal liability or any duty imposed by reason of acts or omissions of the owner.
- E. The Court may approve the borrowing of funds by the Township of Andover 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 must find as follows:
- (1) The Township sought to obtain the necessary financing from the senior lienholder which declined to provide such financing on reasonable terms;
 - (2) The Township 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 with the Clerk of Sussex County.

- F. Where the Township has designated a qualified rehabilitation entity to act on its behalf, the qualified rehabilitation entity shall provide bimonthly reports to the Township Committee on its activities and progress toward rehabilitation and reuse of the property. The Township 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 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 that the Township designate another qualified rehabilitation entity to exercise its rights, or if the Township fails to do so, may terminate the order of possession and return possession and control of the property to its owner.
- G. The Township of Andover 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 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 Township Committee, attesting that the rehabilitation is anticipated to be completed within six months, and a statement setting forth the actions as it plans to undertake consistent with the plan.
- H. Notwithstanding the granting of possession to the Township, nothing in this chapter 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 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. 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.

§ 122-14 Petition for reinstatement of control and possession by owner.

- 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 Court's removal of possession, but no later than 30 days after the Township of Andover 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 has filed said 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 or affect any of the terms or conditions under which the Township has applied for or received financing for the rehabilitation of the property.
- C. If the owner fails to petition for the reinstatement of control and possession of the property within 30 days after the Township 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, the Court may grant the Township title or authorize the Township to sell the property, subject to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 55:19-96.

§ 122-15 Procedure for Township to place liens, obtain title and sell property.

- A. The Township Committee, with the approval of the Court, may place a lien on the property to cover any costs of the Township, in connection with any proceeding under N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et seq., incurred prior to the grant by the Court of an order of possession 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. Where the Township 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.
- C. The Court may authorize the Township of Andover 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. The proceeds of the purchase of the property shall be distributed as set forth in N.J.S.A. 55:19-97.
- D. Upon approval by the Court, the Township 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 N.J.S.A. 55:19-97.
- E. With the exception of the holding of special tax sales pursuant to N.J.S.A. 55:19-101, the remedies available under N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et seq. shall be available to the Township with respect to any abandoned property, whether or not the Township has established an abandoned property list and whether or not the property at issue has been included on any such list.

§122-16 Property deemed not abandoned; criteria; certification of abandonment.

- A. 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 the furtherance of rehabilitation work as authorized by said permits.
- B. If an entity or person other than the Township has purchased or taken assignment for the Township of a tax sale certificate on a property that has not been legally occupied for a period of six (6) months, that property shall not be placed on the abandoned property list if:
 - (1) The owner of the certificate has continued to pay all Township taxes and liens on the property in the tax year when due; and
 - (2) The owner of the certificate takes action to initiate a foreclosure proceeding within six (6) months after the property is eligible for foreclosure pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-86, and diligently pursues foreclosure proceedings in a timely fashion thereafter.
- C. A property which is used on a seasonal basis shall be deemed to be abandoned only if the property meets any two (2) of the additional criteria set forth in N.J.S.A. 55:19-81.

- D. Upon request of a purchaser or assignee of a tax sale certificate seeking to bar the right of redemption on an abandoned property pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-86, the public officer or the Township Tax Collector shall, in a timely fashion, provide the requester with a Certification of Abandonment that the property satisfies the definition of an abandoned property in accordance with this chapter.

§122-14 Petition for reinstatement of control and possession by owner.

- A. An owner may petition for reinstatement of the owner's control and possession of the property at any time after one (1) year from the grant of possession, but no later than thirty (30) days after the Township has filed a Notice of Completion with the court or, in the event the Notice of Completion is filed within less than one (1) year of the grant of possession, within thirty (30) days after the Township has filed notice. 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, or affect any of the terms or conditions under which the Township has applied for or received financing for the rehabilitation of the property.
- B. Any petition for reinstatement of the owner's control and possession of the property shall:
- (1) Include a plan for completion of the rehabilitation and reuse of the property consistent with the plan previously approved by the court;
 - (2) Provide legally binding assurances that the owner will comply with all conditions of any grant or loan secured by the Township or repay those grants or loans in full, at the discretion of the maker of the loan or grant; and
 - (3) Be accompanied by payment equal to the sum of 1) all Township liens outstanding on the property; 2) all costs incurred by the Township in bringing action with respect to the property; 3) any costs incurred by the Township 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, County of Sussex, pending disposition of the petition.

§122-15 Obligations of owner prior to grant of petition.

- A. Prior to the granting of a petition on the part of the owner by the court pursuant to 122-14, 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 to make any repair on the property in the event of a code violation which is not corrected in timely fashion by the owner.
- B. The owner may seek approval of the court to be relieved of this requirement after five (5) 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.

§122-16 Procedure of Township seeking to gain title to property; authorization to sell; proceeds.

- A. If the owner fails to petition for the reinstatement of control and possession of the property within thirty (30) days after the Township has filed a notice of completion or in any event within two (2) 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, upon petition from the Township, the court may grant the Township title or authorize the Township to sell the property, subject to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 55:19-96.

- B. Where the Township 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 the sale in escrow with the court.
- C. The court may authorize the Township 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. The proceeds of the purchase of the property shall be distributed as set forth in N.J.S.A. 55:19-97.
- D. The Township 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.
- E. Upon approval by the court, the Township 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 N.J.S.A. 55:19-97. The proceeds paid pursuant to N.J.S.A. 55:19-96 shall be distributed in the following order of priority:
 - (1) The costs and expenses of sale;
 - (2) Other governmental liens;
 - (3) Repayment of principal and interest on any borrowing or indebtedness incurred by the Township and granted priority lien status pursuant to Subsection a. of N.J.S.A. 55:19-98;
 - (4) A reasonable development fee to the Township 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;
 - (5) Other valid liens and security interests, in accordance with their priority; and
 - (6) The owner.

§122-17 Public officer; authority to place lien on property; remedies.

The public officer, with the approval of the court, may place a lien on the property to cover any costs of the Township in connection with a proceeding under this chapter, incurred prior to the grant by the Court of an order of possession, which may include costs incurred to stabilize or secure the property to ensure that it can be rehabilitated in a cost-effective manner.

§122-18 Eminent domain proceedings; establishment of fair market value.

- A. With respect to any eminent domain proceeding carried out under 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:
 - (1) 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;

- (2) 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 in which the property is located; and
- (3) 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.

B. 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.

SECTION 2. All ordinances of the Township of Andover, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Ordinance, are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

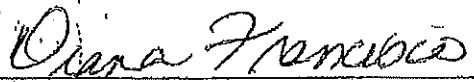
SECTION 3. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

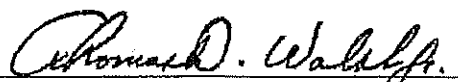
SECTION 4. This Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon final passage, approval, and publication as required by law.

SECTION 5. This Ordinance may be renumbered for codification purposes.

ATTEST:

TOWNSHIP OF ANDOVER
COUNTY OF SUSSEX
STATE OF NEW JERSEY


Diana Francisco, Administrator/Clerk

By: 
Tom Walsh, Mayor

NOTE: AYES: Bensley, Blackburn, Burke, Mc Govern, Walsh
NAYS: None

INTRODUCTION: March 27, 2017
ADOPTION: April 10, 2017
PUBLICATION: April 14, 2017