

BLIGHT

§ 150.030 PURPOSE.

(A) This subchapter is enacted pursuant to authority granted by the Connecticut General Statutes, including, without limitation, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-148(c)(7)(H)(xv), as amended by Public Act 12-146, §§ 2 and 4; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 148-o(b) and Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-152c.

(B) This subchapter prohibits any owner, occupant, agent, tenant and/or person in control of real property located in the town, from allowing, creating, maintaining or causing to be created or maintained blighted premises.

(C) This subchapter shall apply to public and private property, regardless of principal or accessory uses, and is intended to protect, preserve and promote public health, safety and welfare, including the preservation of property values.

(Ord. passed - -)

§ 150.031 DEFINITIONS.

For the purpose of this subchapter, the following definitions shall apply unless the context clearly indicates or requires a different meaning.

BLIGHT ENFORCEMENT OFFICER. A town official and/or employee designated by the Board of Selectmen to enforce this subchapter and to issue citations and/or take other actions he or she deems necessary to compel compliance with it.

BLIGHT HEARING CITATION OFFICER. An official appointed by the Board of Selectmen who is not a town employee who will preside over blight citation hearings, issue decisions and if necessary, convert assessments into judgments in the State Superior Court.

BLIGHTED PREMISES. Any building, structure or parcel of land where at least one of the following conditions exists:

- (1) A condition exists that poses a serious or immediate threat to the health, safety or general welfare of the community;
- (2) A building or structure is a fire hazard; or
- (3) The property is in a state of disrepair or is becoming dilapidated.

STATE OF DISREPAIR or **BECOMING DILAPIDATED** shall mean in a physically deteriorating condition causing unsafe or unsanitary conditions or a nuisance to the general public and be evidenced by one or more of the following conditions:

- (a) Missing, broken or boarded up windows and doors longer than six months;
- (b) Collapsing or missing exterior walls or roof, or other exterior features including, but not necessarily limited to, stairs, porches, railings, hatchways, chimneys or floors;
- (c) Seriously damaged or missing siding or roofing;
- (d) Unrepaired fire or water damage longer than six months;

- (e) Rodent harborage and/or infestation;
- (f) Persistent household garbage or trash on the property;
- (g) Abandoned or unused objects such as automobiles, boats and recreation vehicles which are inoperable or unregistered or in an obvious state of disrepair;
- (h) Parking lots in excess of ten parking spaces in a state of disrepair or abandonment evidenced, for example, by cracks, potholes, overgrowth of vegetation within the surface, pavement or macadam, or within medians and buffers;
- (i) Shrubs, hedges, grass, plants, weeds or any other vegetation that have been left to grow in an unkempt manner that are covering or blocking means of egress or access to any building or that are blocking, interfering with, or otherwise obstructing any sightline, road sign or emergency access to or at the property, when viewed from any property line. Maintained gardens, flower beds and xeriscape landscaping as part of a landscape design are excluded from enforcement under this division (3)(i);
- (j) The overall condition of the property structure and/or grounds causes an unreasonable impact on the value of neighboring properties; and
- (k) Vacant buildings or structure left unsecured or unguarded against unauthorized entry.

(Ord. passed - -)

§ 150.032 EXEMPTIONS.

The following properties shall be exempt from this subchapter:

(A) Farms as defined in the town zoning regulations: A tract of land used for necessary farm buildings in connection with the raising and/or caring for agricultural, livestock, poultry or dairy products, but excluding the raising of fur bearing animals and the maintaining of dog kennels; and

(B) Historic properties as defined in the town ordinance entitled "Ordinance Designating Historic Properties and Establishing a Historic Properties Commission" as codified in Chapter 154 of this code of ordinances.

(Ord. passed - -)

§ 150.033 PROHIBITION.

No owner, agent, occupant and/or a tenant required by a lease to maintain a property, and/or any person in control of real property located in the town shall allow, maintain or cause to be maintained a blighted premises.

(Ord. passed - -) Penalty, see § 150.999

§ 150.034 SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.

(A) Special consideration may be given to individuals that are disabled, elderly or low income in the town's effort to correct housing blight. If an individual cannot maintain a

reasonable level of upkeep of his or her owner-occupied residence because the individual is disabled, elderly or low income, and no capable individual resides in the residence, the town may give said individual a reasonable amount of time to correct the problem, the duration of which shall be in the discretion of the Blight Enforcement Officer. If needed, assistance in finding solutions will be offered by the town.

(B) (1) **CAPABLE INDIVIDUAL** shall mean a person who can be reasonably expected to perform maintenance and yard work around a property or premises. This shall include children above 16 years of age, without a physical or mental disability as defined herein.

(2) **DISABLED INDIVIDUAL** shall mean, in the case of an owner-occupied residence, an individual who has a disability meeting the definitions for the mental or physical disability as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and does not have a household member capable of providing the necessary maintenance.

(3) **ELDERLY INDIVIDUAL** shall mean an individual over the age of 65, who does not have a household member capable of providing the necessary maintenance.

(4) **LOW INCOME INDIVIDUAL** shall mean, in the case of an owner-occupied residence, an individual, or where more than one person resides in the premises, a family unit, that has an income below the highest level of "qualifying income" established by Conn. Gen. Stat. § 12-170d(a)(3).

(Ord. passed - -)

§ 150.035 NOTICE OF BLIGHT VIOLATION.

(A) The Blight Enforcement Officer shall give written notice of a violation of this subchapter to the owner and occupant of the premises and may give written notice to his or her agent(s), and/or any other person responsible for the blighted premises. The notice should be mailed by both certified mail, return receipt requested, and regular mail to the last known address of the person to whom it is directed, to the owner of the property at the last known address on file in the Tax Collector's records and a copy by first class mail to any lienholder's current or last known address pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-148gg.

(B) Such notice shall state the violation and demand its abatement within 60 days. If the violation is not corrected at the end of the 60-day period, the Blight Enforcement Officer may issue an enforcement citation and/or take other enforcement action as specified in § 150.036.

(C) Any person who is a new owner or new occupant of blighted premises shall, upon request in writing to the Blight Enforcement Officer, be granted a 30-day extension of the notice and opportunity to remediate. For purposes of this subchapter, **NEW OWNER** shall mean any person or entity who has taken title to a property within 30 days of the notice of blight violation, and **NEW OCCUPANT** shall mean any person who has taken occupancy of a property within 30 days of said notice.

(Ord. passed - -)

§ 150.036 ENFORCEMENT CITATION.

(A) A citation hearing procedure per Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-152c is hereby established for purposes of this subchapter. The Board of Selectmen shall appoint one or more Citation Hearing Officers for the town. The Citation Hearing Officer may not be a police officer, a Blight Enforcement Officer or an employee of the town.

(B) If a violation remains unabated after 60 days as set forth in the notice of violation issued per § 150.035, the Blight Enforcement Officer may issue a citation to the owner and occupant, and may issue a citation to any other person responsible for the violation in accordance with this subchapter. The citation shall state the penalty amount in accordance with § 150.999, and date (15 days plus three business days) by which the uncontested payment of fines, penalties, costs or fees shall be made. The blight citation shall be mailed by both certified mail, return receipt requested, and regular mail to the owner of the property at the last known address on file in the Tax Collector's records and to any other person responsible at his or her last known address. In addition, the Blight Enforcement Officer shall make reasonable efforts to send a copy by first class mail to any lienholder's current or last known address pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-148gg.

(C) Any person/entity issued a citation pursuant to this subchapter shall be entitled to a hearing to contest the citation pursuant to the provisions of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-152c.

(D) (1) At any time within 12 months from the expiration of the final period for the uncontested payment of fines, penalties, costs or fees set by a citation issued pursuant to this subchapter, the town shall send notice to the person or persons or entity cited to inform the person or persons:

(a) Of the allegations against him, her or it and the amount of the fines, penalties, costs or fees due;

(b) That he, she or it may contest liability before a Citation Hearing Officer by delivering in person or by mail written notice to the office of the First Selectman, 108 Pennsylvania Avenue, Niantic, Connecticut 06357, within ten days of the date thereof;

(c) That if he, she or it does not demand such a hearing, an assessment and judgment shall be entered against him, her or it; and

(d) That such judgment may issue without further notice.

(2) For purposes of this section, notice shall be presumed to have been properly sent if such notice was mailed to such person's last known address on file with the Tax Collector. If the person to whom notice is issued is a registrant, the town may deliver the notice in accordance with Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-148H, provided nothing in this section shall preclude the town from providing notice in another manner permitted by applicable law. The notice shall also be sent by first class mail to any lienholder's current or last known address pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-148gg.

(E) If the person to whom notice is sent pursuant to this section wishes to admit liability, he, she or it may, without requesting a hearing, pay the full amount of the fines, penalties, costs or fees admitted to in person or by mail to an official designated by the town.

(F) Any person to whom notice is sent who does not deliver or mail written demand for a hearing within 15 days plus three business days of the date of the first notice provided for by division (B) above shall be deemed to have admitted liability, and the designated municipal official shall certify such person's failure to respond to the hearing officer. The Citation Hearing Officer shall thereupon enter and assess the fine, penalties, costs or fees provided for by this subchapter and shall follow the procedures for obtaining a judgment from the Superior Court set forth in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 152c(f).

(G) A person who makes a timely request for a hearing shall be given written notice of the date, time and place of the hearing. The hearing shall be held at a time and conducted in the manner provided by Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-152c(e).

(1) The Citation Hearing Officer shall issue a written decision within 30 days of the hearing. If he or she determines that the person is not liable, he or she shall dismiss the matter and enter his or her determination in writing accordingly. If he or she determines that the person is liable for the violation, he or she shall forthwith enter and assess the fines, penalties, costs or fees against such person as provided by this subchapter and issue a notice of assessment by first class mail to the person found liable and to any lienholders pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-148gg. The property owner and the entity liable has 30 days from the notice of assessment to pay the fine.

(2) If the person responsible fails to pay the fine, not less than 30 days nor more than 12 months after such mailing of the notice of assessment, the Citation Hearing Officer shall file a certified copy of the notice of assessment and an entry fee with the Clerk of a Superior Court facility designated by the Chief Court Administrator.

(3) The person against whom an assessment has been entered by the Citation Hearing Officer pursuant to this

section is entitled to judicial review by way of appeal pursuant to the provisions and requirements of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-152c(g).

(Ord. passed - -)

§ 150.037 RECORDING OF LIEN.

Any unpaid fine imposed shall constitute a lien upon the real estate in accordance with Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-148aa. Each such lien shall be continued, recorded and released as provided for in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-148aa and the General Statutes. Each lien shall be mailed to lienholders pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-148gg.

(Ord. passed - -)

§ 150.038 MUNICIPAL PERFORMANCE TO CORRECT; COSTS.

(A) In the event any owner, occupant, agent, tenant or person in control of real estate shall fail to abate or correct any violation specified in any notice, after the issuance of an

enforcement citation for such failure, which citation has become final through the failure of such owner, agent, tenant or person in control of real estate to appeal from the issuance of said citation, or by such appeal being sustained, the town, acting through its Blight Enforcement Officer, may cause or take such action as is necessary to correct such violation. The cost to take such action shall be a civil claim by the town against such owner, agent, tenant or person responsible for such property and the town may bring an action to recover all such costs and expenses incurred.

(B) The owner of a blighted premises may choose to cooperate with the Blight Enforcement Officer and permit the town to cure the blight; provided said owner shall secure the payment of the town's expenses of remediation by way of a lien on the property, or such other document satisfactory to the Town Attorney.

(Ord. passed - -) Penalty, see § 150.999

§ 150.039 EXCEPTIONS AND PENDING APPROVALS.

Any blighted premises for which any land use or building permit application for improvements to the blighted premises is pending, or which has been sold to a bona fide purchaser, shall be exempt from the provisions of this subchapter for a period of 90 days from the date of submittal of a complete application to the town or from the date of sale.

(Ord. passed - -)

§ 150.040 CONFLICT AND SEPARABILITY.

(A) The provisions of this subchapter shall not be construed to prevent the enforcement of other statutes, codes, ordinances or regulations which prescribe standards other than are provided in this subchapter.

(B) If a court of competent jurisdiction finds any provision of this subchapter to be invalid or ineffective in whole or in part, the effect of such decision shall be limited to those provisions which are expressly stated in the decision to be invalid or ineffective, and all other provisions of this subchapter shall continue to be separately and fully effective. If any other ordinance or parts of ordinances are in conflict herewith, the more restrictive provision shall apply.

(Ord. passed - -)