City of Forest Hills, Tennessee

# TITLE 13 - PROPERTY MAINTENANCE REGULATIONS

# CHAPTER 2

SLUM CLEARANCE; UNFIT STRUCTURES

**SECTION**

13-201. Unsafe structures.

13-202. Definitions.

13-203. Initiation of proceedings.

13-204. Orders to owners of unfit structures.

13-205. Public officer may repair, etc.

13-206. Public officer may remove or demolish.

13-207. Lien for expenses; sale of salvaged materials; powers not limited.

13-208. Basis for a finding of unfitness.

13-209. Service of complaints or orders.

13-210. Enjoining enforcement of order.

13-211. Additional powers of public officer. 13-212. Powers conferred are supplemental.

13-213. Structures unfit for human habitation deemed unlawful.

**13-201. Unsafe structures**. Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated,

§ 13-21-101,et seq., the board of commissioners finds that there exists in the city structures that are unfit for human occupation due to dilapidation, defects

increasing the hazards of fire, accident or other calamities, lack of ventilation, light or sanitary facilities, or due to other conditions rendering such dwellings

unsafe or insanitary, or dangerous or detrimental to the health, safety and morals, or otherwise inimical to the welfare of the residents of the city.

1. July 2008)

**13-202. Definitions**. The following definitions shall be applicable to the terms as used within this ordinance:

* 1. "Dwelling" means any building or structure, or part thereof, used and occupied for human occupation or use or intended to be so used, and

includes any outbuildings and appurtenances belonging thereto or usually enjoyed therewith.

* 1. "Governing body" shall mean the board of commissioners.
  2. "Municipality" shall mean the City of Forest Hills, Tennessee, and the areas encompassed within existing city limits.
  3. "Owner" shall mean the holder of title in fee simple and every

mortgagee of record.

* 1. "Parties in interest" shall mean all individuals, associations, corporations and others who have interests of record in a dwelling and any who

are in possession thereof.

* 1. "Place of public accommodation" means any building or structure in which goods are supplied or services performed, or in which the trade of the general public is solicited.
  2. "Public authority" shall mean any housing authority or any officer who is in charge of any department or branch of the government of the city or

state relating to health, fire, building regulations, or other activities concerning

structures in the city.

* 1. "Public officer" means the city manager, city building inspector, or city attorney, or other executive officer who is authorized by the board of

commissioners to exercise the power prescribed herein and pursuant to

Tennessee Code Annotated, § 13-21-101, et. seq.

* 1. "Structure" means any dwelling or place of public accommodation or vacant building or structure suitable as a dwelling or place of public

accommodation. (2008-183, July 2008)

**13-203. Initiation of proceedings**. The building inspector, city manager, or city attorney of the city is hereby authorized to exercise the powers prescribed by this chapter. Whenever a petition is filed with a public officer by the board of commissioners or by at least five (5) residents of the city charging that any structure is unfit for human occupancy or use, or whenever it appears to the public officer (on his own motion) that any structure is unfit for human occupation or use, the public officer shall, if his preliminary investigation discloses a basis for such charges, issue and cause to be served upon the owner of, and parties in interest of, such structure a complaint stating the charges in that respect and containing a notice that a hearing will be held before the board of commissioners (or its designated agent) at a place therein fixed, not less than ten (10) days nor more than thirty (30) days after the service of the complaint; and the owner and parties in interest shall have the right to file an answer to the complaint and to appear in person, or otherwise, and give testimony at the time and place fixed in the complaint; and the rules of evidence prevailing in court of law or equity shall not be controlling in hearings before the governing body. (2008-183, July 2008, modified)

**13-204. Orders to owners of unfit structures**. If, after such notice and hearing as provided for in the preceding section, the board of commissioners determines that the structure under consideration is unfit for human occupation or use, it shall state in writing its finding of fact in support of such determination and shall issue and cause to be served upon the owner thereof an order:

1. If the repair, alteration or improvement of the structure can be made at a reasonable cost in relation to the value of the structure(not exceeding

fifty percent [50%] of the reasonable value),requiring the owner, within the time

specified in the order, to repair, alter, or improve such structure to render it fit

for human occupation or use or to vacate and close the structure for human occupation or use; or

1. If the repair, alteration or improvement of said structure cannot be made at a reasonable cost in relation to the value of the structure(not to exceed

fifty percent [50%] of the value of the premises),requiring the owner within the time specified in the order, to remove or demolish such structure. (2008-183,

July 2008)

**13-205. Public officer may repair, etc**. If the owner fails to comply with the order to repair, alter, or improve or to vacate and close the structure as specified in the preceding section hereof, the public officer may cause such structure to be repaired, altered, or improved, or to be vacated and closed; and the public officer may cause to be posted on the main entrance of any dwelling so closed, a placard with the following words: "This building is unfit for human occupation or use. The use or occupation of this building for human occupation or use is prohibited and unlawful." (2008-183, July 2008)

**13-206. Public officer may remove or demolish**. If the owner fails to comply with an order, as specified above, to remove or demolish the structure, the public officer may cause such structure to be removed and/or demolished. (2008-183, July 2008)

**13-207. Lien for expenses; sale of salvaged materials; powers not limited**. (1) The amount of the cost of such repairs, alterations or improvements, or vacating and closing, or removal or demolition by the public officer shall be assessed against the owner of the property, and shall upon the filing of the notice with the office of the register of deeds of Davidson County, be a lien on the property in favor of the city, second only to liens of the state, county and City of Nashville for taxes, any lien of the county for special assessments, and any valid lien, right, or interest in such property duly recorded or duly perfected by filing, prior to the filing of such notice. These costs shall be collected by the county trustee at the same time and in the same manner as property taxes are collected. If the owner fails to pay the costs, they may be collected at the same time and in the same manner as delinquent property taxes are collected and shall be subject to the same penalty and interest as delinquent property taxes. In addition, the municipality may collect the costs assessed against the owner through an action for debt filed in any court of competent jurisdiction. The city may bring one (1) action for debt against more than one or all of the owners of properties against whom said costs have been assessed and the fact that multiple owners have been joined in one (1) action shall not be considered by the court as a misjoinder of parties.

1. If the structure is removed or demolished by the public officer, he shall sell the materials of such structure and shall credit the proceeds of such

sale against the cost of the removal or demolition, and any balance remaining

shall be deposited in the chancery court of county by the public officer, shall be secured in such manner as may be directed by such court, and shall be disbursed by such court to the person found to be entitled thereto by final order or decree of such court.

1. Nothing in this section shall be construed to impair or limit in any way the power of the city or to define and declare nuisances and to cause their removal or abatement, by summary proceedings or otherwise. (2008-183, July 2008)

**13-208. Basis for a finding of unfitness**. The public officer defined herein shall have the power and may determine that a structure is unfit for human occupation and use if he finds that conditions exist in such structure which are dangerous or injurious to the health, safety or morals of the occupants or users of such structure, the occupants or users of neighboring structures or other residents of the City of Forest Hills. Such conditions may include the following (without limiting the generality of the foregoing): defects therein increasing the hazards of fire, accident, or other calamities; lack of adequate ventilation, light, or sanitary facilities; dilapidation; disrepair; structural defects; or uncleanliness. (2008-183, July 2008)

**13-209. Service of complaints or orders**. Complaints or orders issued by the public officer pursuant to this chapter shall be served upon persons, either personally or by registered mail, but if the whereabouts of such persons are unknown and the same cannot be ascertained by the public officer in the exercise of reasonable diligence, and the public officer shall make an affidavit to that effect, then the serving of such complaint or order upon such persons may be made by publishing the same once each week for two (2) consecutive weeks in a newspaper printed and published in the city. In addition, a copy of such complaint or order shall be posted in a conspicuous place on premises affected by the complaint or order. A copy of such complaint or order shall also be filed for record in the register of deeds' office of Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee, and such filing shall have the same force and effect as other lis pendens notices provided by law. (2008-183, July 2008)

**13-210. Enjoining enforcement of order**. Any person affected by an order issued by the public officer served pursuant to this chapter may file a bill in chancery court for an injunction restraining the public officer from carrying out the provisions of the order, and the court may, upon the filing of such suit, issue a temporary injunction restraining the public officer pending the final disposition of the cause; provided, however, that within sixty (60) days after the posting and service of the order of the public officer, such person shall file such bill in the court.

The remedy provided herein shall be the exclusive remedy and no person affected by an order of the public officer shall be entitled to recover any damages

for action taken pursuant to any order of the public officer, or because of noncompliance by such person with any order of the public officer. (2008-183, July 2008)

**13-211. Additional powers of public officer**. The public officer, in order to carry out and effectuate the purposes and provisions of this chapter, shall have the following powers in addition to those otherwise granted herein:

1. To investigate conditions of the structures in the city in order to determine which structures therein are unfit for human occupation or use;
2. To administer oaths, affirmations, examine witnesses and receive

evidence;

1. To enter upon premises for the purpose of making examination, provided that such entry shall be made in such manner as to cause the least

possible inconvenience to the persons in possession;

1. To appoint and fix the duties of such officers, agents and employees as he deems necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter; and
2. To delegate any of his functions and powers under this section to such officers and agents as he may designate. (2008-183, July 2008)

**13-212. Powers conferred are supplemental**. This section shall not be construed to abrogate or impair the powers of the city with regard to the enforcement of the provisions of its charter or any other ordinances or regulations, nor to prevent or punish violations thereof, and the powers conferred by this section shall be in addition and supplemental to the powers conferred by the charter and other laws. (2008-183, July 2008)

**13-213. Structures unfit for human habitation deemed unlawful**. It shall be unlawful for any owner of record to create, maintain or permit to be maintained in the city structures that are unfit for human occupation due to dilapidation, defects increasing the hazards of fire, accident or other calamities, lack of ventilation, light or sanitary facilities, or due to other conditions rendering such dwellings unsafe or unsanitary, or dangerous or detrimental to the health, safety and morals, or otherwise inimical to the welfare of the residents of the city.

Violations of this section shall subject the offender to a class C misdemeanor. Each day a violation is allowed to continue shall constitute a separate offense. (2008-183, July 2008)