

TITLE 13

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE REGULATIONS¹

CHAPTER

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CHAPTER 1

MISCELLANEOUS

SECTION

- 13-101. Overgrown and dirty lots.
- 13-102. Dead animals.
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- 13-107. Storage of vehicles restricted.
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13-101. Overgrown and dirty lots. (1) Prohibition. Pursuant to the authority granted to municipalities under Tennessee Code Annotated, § 6-54-113, it shall be unlawful for any owner of record of real property to create, maintain, or permit to be maintained on such property the growth of trees, vines, grass, underbrush and/or the accumulations of debris, trash, litter, or garbage or any combination of the preceding elements so as to endanger the health, safety, or welfare of other citizens or to encourage the infestation of rats and other harmful animals.

(2) Designation of public officer or department. The board of mayor and aldermen shall designate an appropriate department or person to enforce the provisions of this section.

(3) Notice to property owner. It shall be the duty of the department or person designated by the board of mayor and aldermen to enforce this section to serve notice upon the owner of record in violation of subsection (1) above, a notice in plain language to remedy the condition within ten (10) days (or twenty (20) days if the owner of record is a carrier engaged in the transportation of

¹Municipal code references
Animal control: title 10.
Littering streets, etc.: § 16-108.

property or is a utility transmitting communications, electricity, gas, liquids, steam, sewage, or other materials), excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays. The notice shall be sent by registered or certified United States Mail, addressed to the last known address of the owner of record. The notice shall state that the owner of the property is entitled to a hearing, and shall, at the minimum, contain the following additional information:

(a) A brief statement that the owner is in violation of § 13-101 of the Decatur Municipal Code, which has been enacted under the authority of Tennessee Code Annotated, § 6-54-113, and that the property of such owner may be cleaned up at the expense of the owner and a lien placed against the property to secure the cost of the clean-up;

(b) The person, office, address, and telephone number of the department or person giving the notice;

(c) A cost estimate for remedying the noted condition, which shall be in conformity with the standards of cost in the town; and

(d) A place wherein the notified party may return a copy of the notice, indicating the desire for a hearing.

(4) Clean-up at property owner's expense. If the property owner of record fails or refuses to remedy the condition within ten (10) days after receiving the notice (twenty (20) days if the owner is a carrier engaged in the transportation of property or is a utility transmitting communications, electricity, gas, liquids, steam, sewage, or other materials), the department or person designated by the board of mayor and aldermen to enforce the provisions of this section shall immediately cause the condition to be remedied or removed at a cost in conformity with reasonable standards, and the cost thereof shall be assessed against the owner of the property. Upon the filing of the notice with the office of the register of deeds in Meigs County, the costs shall be a lien on the property in favor of the municipality, second only to liens of the state, county, and municipality for taxes, any lien of the municipality 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 placed on the tax rolls of the municipality as a lien and shall be added to property tax bills to be collected 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.

(5) Appeal. The owner of record who is aggrieved by the determination and order of the public officer may appeal the determination and order to the board of mayor and aldermen. The appeal shall be filed with the city recorder within ten (10) days following the receipt of the notice issued pursuant to subsection (3) above. The failure to appeal within this time shall, without exception, constitute a waiver of the right to a hearing.

(6) Judicial review. Any person aggrieved by an order or act of the board of mayor and aldermen under subsection (5) above may seek judicial review of

the order or act. The time period established in subsection (4) above shall be stayed during the pendency of judicial review.

(7) Supplemental nature of this section. The provisions of this section are in addition and supplemental to, and not in substitution for, any other provision in the municipal charter, this municipal code of ordinances or other applicable law which permits the town to proceed against an owner, tenant or occupant of property who has created, maintained, or permitted to be maintained on such property the growth of trees, vines, grass, weeds, underbrush and/or the accumulation of the debris, trash, litter, or garbage or any combination of the preceding elements, under its charter, any other provisions of this municipal code of ordinances or any other applicable law. (as amended by Ord. #176, Nov. 2010)

13-102. Dead animals. Any person owning or having possession of any dead animal not intended for use as food shall promptly bury the same or notify the city recorder and dispose of such animal in such manner as the city recorder shall direct.

13-103. Smoke, soot, cinders, etc. It shall be unlawful for any person to permit or cause the escape of such quantities of dense smoke, soot, cinders, noxious acids, fumes, dust, or gases as to be detrimental to or to endanger the health, comfort, and safety of the public or so as to cause or have a tendency to cause injury or damage to property or business. (1970 Code, § 8-505)

13-104. Stagnant water. It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly allow any pool of stagnant water to accumulate and stand on his property without treating it so as to effectively prevent the breeding of mosquitoes. (1970 Code, § 8-506)

13-105. Weeds, etc. prohibited. No person owning, leasing, occupying or otherwise having control of real property within the municipality, regardless of whether such property is a vacant lot or is improved with any form of structure, shall permit the growth upon such property of weeds, grass, brush and all other rank or noxious vegetation to a height greater than twelve (12) inches when such growth is within two hundred (200) feet of occupied residential or commercial property, or is within two hundred (200) feet of any street, thoroughfare, or highway. (Ord. #39, May 1982)

13-106. Health and sanitation nuisances. It shall be unlawful for any person to permit any premises owned, occupied, or controlled by him to become or remain in a filthy condition, or permit the use or occupation of same in such a manner as to create noxious or offensive smells and odors in connection therewith, or to allow the accumulation or creation of unwholesome and offensive matter or the breeding of flies, rodents, or other vermin on the

premises to the menace of the public health or the annoyance of people residing within the vicinity. (1970 Code, § 8-509)

13-107. Storage of vehicles restricted. (1) It shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to permit any premises owned, occupied or controlled by them to become an outside storage place for wrecked automobiles and/or for repair or disassembly of automobiles.

(2) It shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to store any vehicle on their lawns, driveways or premises for repair and/or disassembly of same.

(3) After violation of this section for more than seven (7) days, the town police department has full authority to remove said vehicles from the premises and the owner shall pay all costs and expenses required for removal of said vehicle from the premises. Any person, firm or corporation violation any provision of this section shall be punishable under the general penalty clause of this chapter. (1970 Code, §§ 8-509A and 8-509B)

13-108. Violations and penalty. Violations of this chapter shall subject the offender to a penalty under the general penalty provision of this code. Each day a violation is allowed to continue shall constitute a separate offense. (Ord. #39, May 1982, modified)

CHAPTER 2

JUNKYARDS¹

SECTION

- 13-201. Definitions.
- 13-202. Junkyard screening.
- 13-203. Screening methods.
- 13-204. Requirements for effective screening.
- 13-205. Maintenance of screens.
- 13-206. Utilization of highway right-of-way.
- 13-207. Non-conforming junkyards.
- 13-208. Permits and fees.
- 13-209. Violations and penalty.

13-201. Definitions. (1) "Junk" shall mean old or scrap copper, brass, rope, rags, batteries, paper, trash, rubber, debris, waste, or junked, dismantled, or wrecked automobiles, trucks, vehicles of all kinds, or parts thereof, iron, steel, and other old or scrap ferrous or nonferrous material.

(2) "Junkyard" shall mean an establishment or place of business which is maintained, operated, or used for storing, keeping, buying, or selling junk, or for the maintenance or operation of an automobile graveyard. This definition includes scrap metal processors, used auto parts yards, yards providing temporary storage of automobile bodies or parts awaiting disposal as a normal part of the business operation when the business will continually have like materials located on the premises, garbage dumps, sanitary landfills, and recycling centers.

(3) "Recycling center" means an establishment, place of business, facility or building which is maintained, operated, or used for the storing, keeping, buying, or selling of newspaper or used food or beverage containers or plastic containers for the purpose of converting such items into a usable product.

(4) "Person" means any individual, firm, agency, company, association, partnership, business trust, joint stock company, body politic, or corporation.

(5) "Screening" means the use of plantings, fencing, natural objects, and other appropriate means which screen any deposit of junk so that the junk is not visible from the highways and streets of the town.

13-202. Junkyard screening. Every junkyard shall be screened or otherwise removed from view by its owner or operator in such a manner as to bring the junkyard into compliance with this chapter.

¹Municipal code reference

Business tax: title 5, chapter 2.

13-203. Screening methods. The following methods and materials for screening are given for consideration only:

(1) Landscape planting. The planting of trees, shrubs, etc., of sufficient size and density to provide a year-round effective screen. Plants of the evergreen variety are recommended.

(2) Earth grading. The construction of earth mounds which are graded, shaped, and planted to a natural appearance.

(3) Architectural barriers. The utilization of:

(a) Panel fences made of metal, plastic, fiberglass, or plywood.

(b) Wood fences of vertical or horizontal boards using durable woods such as western cedar or redwood or others treated with a preservative.

(c) Walls of masonry, including plain or ornamented concrete block, brick, stone, or other suitable materials.

(4) Natural objects. Naturally occurring rock outcrops, woods, earth mounds, etc., may be utilized for screening or used in conjunction with fences, plantings, or other appropriate objects to form an effective screen.

13-204. Requirements for effective screening. Screening may be accomplished using natural objects, earth mounds, landscape plantings, fences, or other appropriate materials used singly or in combination as approved by the town. The effect of the completed screening must be the concealment of the junkyard from view on a year-round basis.

(1) Screens which provide a "see-through" effect when viewed from a moving vehicle shall not be acceptable.

(2) Open entrances through which junk materials are visible from the main traveled way shall not be permitted except where entrance gates, capable of concealing the junk materials when closed, have been installed. Entrance gates must remain closed from sundown to sunrise.

(3) Screening shall be located on private property and not on any part of the highway right-of-way.

(4) At no time after the screen is established shall junk be stacked or placed high enough to be visible above the screen nor shall junk be placed outside of the screened area.

13-205. Maintenance of screens. The owner or operator of the junkyard shall be responsible for maintaining the screen in good repair to insure the continuous concealment of the junkyard. Damaged or dilapidated screens, including dead or diseased plantings, which permit a view of the junk within shall render the junkyard visible and shall be in violation of this code and shall be replaced as required by the town.

If not replaced within sixty (60) days the town may replace said screening and require payment upon demand.

13-206. Utilization of highway right-of-way. The utilization of highway right-of-way for operating or maintaining any portion of a junkyard is prohibited; this shall include temporary use for the storage of junk pending disposition.

13-207. Non-conforming junkyards. Those junkyards within the town and lawfully in existence prior to the enactment of this code, which do not conform with the provisions of the code shall be considered as "non-conforming." Such junkyards shall be subject to the following conditions, any violation of which shall terminate the non-conforming status:

- (1) The junkyard must continue to be lawfully maintained.
- (2) There must be existing property rights in the junk or junkyard.
- (3) Abandoned junkyards shall no longer be lawful.
- (4) The location of the junkyard may not be changed for any reason.

If the location is changed, the junkyard shall be treated as a new establishment at a new location and shall conform to the laws of the town.

- (5) The junkyard may not be extended or enlarged.

13-208. Permits and fees. It shall be unlawful for any junkyard located within the town to operate without a "Junkyard Control Permit" issued by the town.

(1) Permits shall be valid for the fiscal year for which issued and shall be subject to renewal each year. The town's fiscal year begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 the year next following.

(2) Each application for an original or renewal permit shall be accompanied by a fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00) which is not subject to either proration or refund.

(3) All applications for an original or renewal permit shall be made on a form prescribed by the town.

(4) Permits shall be issued only to those junkyards that are in compliance with these rules.

(5) A permit is valid only while held by the permittee and for the location for which it is issued.

13-209. Violations and penalty. Violations of this chapter shall subject the offender to a penalty under the general penalty provision of this code. Each day a violation is allowed to continue shall constitute a separate offense.

CHAPTER 3

SLUM CLEARANCE¹

SECTION

- 13-301. Findings of board.
- 13-302. Definitions.
- 13-303. "Public officer" designated; powers.
- 13-304. Initiation of proceedings; hearings.
- 13-305. Orders to owners of unfit structures.
- 13-306. When public officer may repair, etc.
- 13-307. When public officer may remove or demolish.
- 13-308. Lien for expenses; sale of salvage materials; other powers not limited.
- 13-309. Basis for a finding of unfitness.
- 13-310. Service of complaints or orders.
- 13-311. Enjoining enforcement of orders.
- 13-312. Additional powers of public officer.
- 13-313. Powers conferred are supplemental.
- 13-314. Structures unfit for human habitation deemed unlawful.

13-301. Findings of board. Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated, § 13-21-101, *et seq.*, the board of mayor and aldermen finds that there exists in the town structures which 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 town.

13-302. Definitions. (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 outhouses and appurtenances belonging thereto or usually enjoyed therewith.

(2) "Governing body" shall mean the board of mayor and aldermen charged with governing the town.

(3) "Municipality" shall mean the Town of Decatur, Tennessee, and the areas encompassed within existing town limits or as hereafter annexed.

(4) "Owner" shall mean the holder of title in fee simple and every mortgagee of record.

¹State law reference

Tennessee Code Annotated, title 13, chapter 21.

(5) "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.

(6) "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.

(7) "Public authority" shall mean any housing authority or any officer who is in charge of any department or branch of the government of the town or state relating to health, fire, building regulations, or other activities concerning structures in the town.

(8) "Public officer" means any officer or officers of a municipality or the executive director or other chief executive officer of any commission or authority established by such municipality or jointly with any other municipality who is authorized by this chapter to exercise the power prescribed herein and pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated, § 13-21-101, et seq.

(9) "Structure" means any dwelling or place of public accommodation or vacant building or structure suitable as a dwelling or place of public accommodation.

13-303. "Public officer" designated; powers. There is hereby designated and appointed a "public officer," to be the director of public works of the town, to exercise the powers prescribed by this chapter, which powers shall be supplemental to all others held by the director of public works.

13-304. Initiation of proceedings; hearings. Whenever a petition is filed with the public officer by a public authority or by at least five (5) residents of the town 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 public officer (or his 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 courts of law or equity shall not be controlling in hearings before the public officer.

13-305. Orders to owners of unfit structures. If, after such notice and hearing as provided for in the preceding section, the public officer determines that the structure under consideration is unfit for human occupation or use, he shall state in writing his 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

(2) 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.

13-306. When 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."

13-307. When 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 demolished.

13-308. Lien for expenses; sale of salvaged materials; other powers not limited. 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 Meigs County, be a lien on the property in favor of the municipality, second only to liens of the state, county and municipality for taxes, any lien of the municipality 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 municipal tax collector or 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 municipality 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. 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 Meigs 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. Nothing in this section shall be construed to impair or limit in any way the power of the Town of Decatur to define and declare nuisances and to cause their removal or abatement, by summary proceedings or otherwise.

13-309. 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 Town of Decatur. 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.

13-310. 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 town. 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's Office of Meigs County, Tennessee, and such filing shall have the same force and effect as other lis pendens notices provided by law.

13-311. Enjoining enforcement of orders. 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.

13-312. 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 town in order to determine which structures therein are unfit for human occupation or use;

(2) To administer oaths, affirmations, examine witnesses and receive evidence;

(3) 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;

(4) 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

(5) To delegate any of his functions and powers under this chapter to such officers and agents as he may designate.

13-313. Powers conferred are supplemental. This chapter shall not be construed to abrogate or impair the powers of the town 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 chapter shall be in addition and supplemental to the powers conferred by the charter and other laws.

13-314. 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 town structures which 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 town.

Violations of this section shall subject the offender to a penalty under the general penalty provision of this code. Each day a violation is allowed to continue shall constitute a separate offense.