

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 46th Legislature (1998)

HOUSE BILL NO. 2708

By: Satterfield

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to cities and towns; amending 11 O.S. 1991, Sections 22-111, as amended by Section 1, Chapter 206, O.S.L. 1994, 22-112, as amended by Section 1, Chapter 83, O.S.L. 1997, 22-112.1, as amended by Section 2, Chapter 83, O.S.L. 1997, and Section 1, Chapter 170, O.S.L. 1997 (11 O.S. Supp. 1997, Sections 22-111, 22-112, 22-112.1, and 22-112.2), which relate to cleaning and mowing of property, condemnation of dilapidated property, boarding and securing dilapidated buildings, and removing graffiti by municipalities; requiring certified mailing of certain notices to clean and mow property, condemn dilapidated buildings, board and secure dilapidated buildings, and remove graffiti by municipalities; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 11 O.S. 1991, Section 22-111, as amended by Section 1, Chapter 206, O.S.L. 1994 (11 O.S. Supp. 1997, Section 22-111), is amended to read as follows:

Section 22-111. A. A municipal governing body may cause property within the municipal limits to be cleaned of trash and weeds or grass to be cut or mowed in accordance with the following procedure:

1. At least ten (10) days' notice shall be given to the owner of the property by certified mail with return receipt requested at the address shown by the current year's tax rolls in the county treasurer's office before the governing body holds a hearing or takes action. The notice shall order the property owner to clean the property of trash, or to cut or mow the weeds or grass on the property, as appropriate, and ~~said~~ the notice shall further state that unless ~~such~~ the work is performed within ten (10) days of the date of the notice the work shall be done by the municipality and a notice of lien shall be filed with the county clerk against the property for the costs due and owing the municipality. ~~At the time of mailing of notice to the property owner, the municipality shall obtain a receipt of mailing from the postal service, which receipt shall indicate the date of mailing and the name and address of the mailee.~~ However, if the property owner cannot be located within ten (10) days from the date of mailing by the municipal governing body, notice may be given by posting a copy of the notice on the property or by publication, as defined in Section 1-102 of this title, one time not less than ten (10) days prior to any hearing or action by the municipality. If a municipal governing body anticipates summary abatement of a nuisance in accordance with the provisions of subsection B of this section, the notice, whether by certified mail, posting or publication, shall state: that any accumulations of trash or excessive weed or grass growth on the owner's property occurring within six (6) months from and after the date of this notice may be summarily abated by the municipal governing body; that the costs of ~~such~~ the abatement shall be assessed against the owner;

and that a lien may be imposed on the property to secure such payment, all without further prior notice to the property owner;

2. The owner of the property may give ~~his~~ written consent to the municipality authorizing the removal of the trash or the mowing of the weeds or grass. By giving ~~said~~ the written consent, the owner waives ~~his~~ any right to a hearing by the municipality;

3. A hearing may be held by the municipal governing body to determine whether the accumulation of trash or the growth of weeds or grass has caused the property to become detrimental to the health, benefit, and welfare of the public and the community or a hazard to traffic, or creates a fire hazard to the danger of property;

4. Upon a finding that the condition of the property constitutes a detriment or hazard, and that the property would be benefited by the removal of such conditions, the agents of the municipality are granted the right of entry on the property for the removal of trash, mowing of weeds or grass, and performance of the necessary duties as a governmental function of the municipality. Immediately following the cleaning or mowing of the property, the municipal clerk shall file a notice of lien with the county clerk describing the property and the work performed by the municipality, and stating that the municipality claims a lien on ~~said~~ the property for the cleaning or mowing costs;

5. The governing body shall determine the actual cost of ~~such~~ the cleaning and mowing and any other expenses as may be necessary in connection therewith, including the cost of notice and mailing. The municipal clerk shall forward by mail to the property owner specified in paragraph 1 of this subsection a statement of ~~such~~ the actual cost and demanding payment. If the cleaning and mowing are done by the municipality, the cost to the property owner for ~~said~~ the cleaning and mowing shall not exceed the actual cost of the labor, maintenance, and equipment required. If the cleaning and

mowing are done on a private contract basis, the contract shall be awarded to the lowest and best bidder;

6. If payment is not made within thirty (30) days from the date of the mailing of the statement, the municipal clerk shall forward a certified statement of the amount of the cost to the county treasurer of the county in which the property is located and the same shall be levied on the property and collected by the county treasurer as other taxes authorized by law. Until fully paid, the cost and the interest thereon shall be the personal obligation of the property owner from and after the date the cost is certified to the county treasurer. In addition the cost and the interest thereon shall be a lien against the property from the date the cost is certified to the county treasurer, coequal with the lien of ad valorem taxes and all other taxes and special assessments and prior and superior to all other titles and liens against the property, and the lien shall continue until the cost shall be fully paid. At the time of collection, the county treasurer shall collect a fee of Five Dollars (\$5.00) for each parcel of property. ~~Said~~ The fee shall be deposited to the credit of the general fund of the county. At any time prior to the collection as provided in this paragraph, the municipality may pursue any civil remedy for collection of the amount owing and interest thereon including an action in personam against the property owner and an action in rem to foreclose its lien against the property. A mineral interest, if severed from the surface interest and not owned by the surface owner, shall not be subject to any tax or judgment lien created pursuant to this section. Upon receiving payment, if any, the municipal clerk shall forward to the county treasurer a notice of ~~such~~ the payment and directing discharge of the lien; and

7. The municipality may designate by ordinance an administrative officer or administrative body to carry out the duties of the governing body in subsection A of this section. The

property owner shall have a right of appeal to the municipal governing body from any order of the administrative officer or administrative body. ~~Such~~ The appeal shall be taken by filing written notice of appeal with the municipal clerk within ten (10) days after the administrative order is rendered.

B. If a notice is given by a municipal governing body to a property owner ordering the property within the municipal limits to be cleaned of trash and weeds or grass to be cut or mowed in accordance with the procedures provided for in subsection A of this section, any subsequent accumulations of trash or excessive weed or grass growth on the property occurring within a six-month period may be declared to be a nuisance and may be summarily abated without further prior notice to the property owner. At the time of each ~~such~~ summary abatement the municipality shall notify the property owner of the abatement and the costs thereof. The notice shall state that the property owner may request a hearing within ten (10) days after the date of mailing the notice. The notice and hearing shall be as provided for in subsection A of this section. Unless otherwise determined at the hearing the cost of ~~such~~ the abatement shall be determined and collected as provided for in paragraphs 5 and 6 of subsection A of this section. ~~Provided, however, that~~ However, this subsection shall not apply if the records of the county clerk show that the property was transferred after notice was given pursuant to subsection A of this section.

C. The municipal governing body may enact ordinances to prohibit owners of property or persons otherwise in possession or control located within the municipal limits from allowing trash to accumulate, or weeds to grow or stand upon the premises and may impose penalties for violation of ~~said~~ the ordinances.

D. As used in this section:

1. "Weed" includes but is not limited to poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac and all vegetation at any state of maturity which:

- a. exceeds twelve (12) inches in height, except healthy trees, shrubs, or produce for human consumption grown in a tended and cultivated garden unless ~~such~~ the trees and shrubbery by their density or location constitute a detriment to the health, benefit and welfare of the public and community or a hazard to traffic or create a fire hazard to the property or otherwise interfere with the mowing of ~~said~~ the weeds;
- b. regardless of height, harbors, conceals, or invites deposits or accumulation of refuse or trash;
- c. harbors rodents or vermin;
- d. gives off unpleasant or noxious odors;
- e. constitutes a fire or traffic hazard; or
- f. is dead or diseased.

The term "weed" shall not include tended crops on land zoned for agricultural use which are planted more than one hundred fifty (150) feet from a parcel zoned for other than agricultural use.

2. "Trash" means any refuse, litter, ashes, leaves, debris, paper, combustible materials, rubbish, offal, or waste, or matter of any kind or form which is uncared for, discarded, or abandoned.

3. "Owner" means the owner of record as shown by the most current tax rolls of the county treasurer.

4. "Cleaning" means the removal of trash from property.

E. The provisions of this section shall not apply to any property zoned and used for agricultural purposes.

SECTION 2. AMENDATORY 11 O.S. 1991, Section 22-112, as amended by Section 1, Chapter 83, O.S.L. 1997 (11 O.S. Supp. 1997, Section 22-112), is amended to read as follows:

Section 22-112. A municipal governing body may cause dilapidated buildings within the municipal limits to be torn down and removed in accordance with the provisions of this section.

1. At least ten (10) days' notice that a building is to be torn down or removed shall be given to the owner of the property before the governing body holds a hearing. A copy of the notice shall be posted on the property to be affected. In addition, a copy of the notice shall be sent by certified mail with return receipt requested to the property owner at the address shown by the current year's tax rolls in the office of the county treasurer. Written notice shall also be mailed to any mortgage holder as shown by the records in the office of the county clerk to the last-known address of the mortgagee. At the time of mailing of notice to any ~~property owner~~ ~~or~~ mortgage holder, the municipality shall obtain a receipt of mailing from the postal service, which receipt shall indicate the date of mailing and the name and address of the mailee. However, if neither the property owner nor mortgage holder can be located, notice may be given by posting a copy of the notice on the property, or by publication as defined in Section 1-102 of this title. The notice may be published once not less than ten (10) days prior to any hearing or action by the municipality pursuant to the provisions of this section.

2. A hearing shall be held by the governing body to determine if the property is dilapidated and has become detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the general public and the community, or if the property creates a fire hazard which is dangerous to other property.

3. Pursuant to a finding that the condition of the property constitutes a detriment or a hazard and that the property would be benefited by the removal of such conditions, the governing body may cause the dilapidated building to be torn down and removed. The governing body shall fix reasonable dates for the commencement and

completion of the work. The municipal clerk shall immediately file a notice of dilapidation and lien with the county clerk describing the property, the findings of the municipality at the hearing, and stating that the municipality claims a lien on the property for the destruction and removal costs and that such costs are the personal obligation of the property owner from and after the date of filing of the notice. The agents of the municipality are granted the right of entry on the property for the performance of the necessary duties as a governmental function of the municipality if the work is not performed by the property owner within dates fixed by the governing body.

4. The governing body shall determine the actual cost of the dismantling and removal of dilapidated buildings and any other expenses that may be necessary in conjunction with the dismantling and removal of the buildings, including the cost of notice and mailing. The municipal clerk shall forward a statement of the actual cost attributable to the dismantling and removal of the buildings and a demand for payment of such costs, by mail to the property owner. In addition, a copy of the statement shall be mailed to any mortgage holder at the address provided for in paragraph 1 of this section. At the time of mailing of the statement of costs to any property owner or mortgage holder, the municipality shall obtain a receipt of mailing from the postal service, which receipt shall indicate the date of mailing and the name and address of the mailee. If a municipality dismantles or removes any dilapidated buildings, the cost to the property owner shall not exceed the actual cost of the labor, maintenance, and equipment required for the dismantling and removal of the dilapidated buildings. If dismantling and removal of the dilapidated buildings is done on a private contract basis, the contract shall be awarded to the lowest and best bidder.

5. When payment is made to the municipality for costs incurred, the municipal clerk shall file a release of lien, but if payment attributable to the actual cost of the dismantling and removal of the buildings is not made within six (6) months from the date of the mailing of the statement to the owner of such property, the municipal clerk shall forward a certified statement of the amount of the cost to the county treasurer of the county in which the property is located. The costs shall be levied on the property and collected by the county treasurer as are other taxes authorized by law. Until finally paid, the costs and the interest thereon shall be the personal obligation of the property owner from and after the date of the notice of dilapidation and lien is filed with the county clerk. In addition the cost and the interest thereon shall be a lien against the property from the date the notice of the lien is filed with the county clerk. The lien shall be coequal with the lien of ad valorem taxes and all other taxes and special assessments and shall be prior and superior to all other titles and liens against the property. The lien shall continue until the cost is fully paid. At the time of collection, the county treasurer shall collect a fee of Five Dollars (\$5.00) for each parcel of property. The fee shall be deposited to the credit of the general fund of the county. At any time prior to collection as provided for in this paragraph, the municipality may pursue any civil remedy for collection of the amount owing and interest thereon including an action in personam against the property owner and an action in rem to foreclose its lien against the property. A mineral interest, if severed from the surface interest and not owned by the surface owner, shall not be subject to any tax or judgment lien created pursuant to this section. Upon receiving payment, the municipal clerk shall forward to the county treasurer a notice of such payment and shall direct discharge of the lien.

6. The municipality may designate, by ordinance, an administrative officer or administrative body to carry out the duties of the governing body specified in this section. The property owner shall have the right of appeal to the municipal governing body from any order of the administrative officer or administrative body. Such appeal shall be taken by filing written notice of appeal with the municipal clerk within ten (10) days after the administrative order is rendered.

7. For the purposes of this section:

- a. "dilapidated building" means a structure which through neglect or injury lacks necessary repairs or otherwise is in a state of decay or partial ruin to such an extent that the structure is a hazard to the health, safety, or welfare of the general public or a vacant structure which is unfit for human occupancy due to the lack of necessary repairs and is considered uninhabitable and is a hazard to the health, safety, and welfare of the general public, and
- b. "owner" means the owner of record as shown by the most current tax rolls of the county treasurer.

8. Nothing in the provisions of this section shall prevent the municipality from abating a dilapidated building as a nuisance or otherwise exercising its police power to protect the health, safety, or welfare of the general public.

9. The officers, employees or agents of the municipality shall not be liable for any damages or loss of property due to the removal of dilapidated buildings performed pursuant to the provisions of this section or as otherwise prescribed by law.

10. The provisions of this act shall not apply to any property zoned and used for agricultural purposes.

SECTION 3. AMENDATORY 11 O.S. 1991, Section 22-112.1, as amended by Section 2, Chapter 83, O.S.L. 1997 (11 O.S. Supp. 1997, Section 22-112.1), is amended to read as follows:

Section 22-112.1 A. After a building has been declared dilapidated, as provided in Section 22-112 of this title, and before the commencement of the ~~tearing~~ dismantling and removal of a dilapidated building, the governing body of any municipality may authorize that such a building be boarded and secured. However, if the dilapidated building is vacant and unfit for human occupancy, the governing body of any municipality may authorize the structure to be demolished pursuant to Section 22-112 of this title.

B. A governing body of any municipality may cause the premises on which an unsecured building is located to be cleaned of trash and weeds in accordance with the provisions of Section 22-111 of this title.

C. A governing body of any municipality may cause an unsecured building to be boarded and secured in accordance with the following procedures:

1. Before the governing body orders such action, at least ten (10) days' notice that ~~such~~ the unsecured building is to be boarded and secured shall be given by certified mail with return receipt requested to any property owners ~~and mortgage holders~~ as provided in Section 22-112 of this title. Written notice shall also be mailed to any mortgage holder as provided in Section 22-112 of this title. At the time of mailing of notice to any ~~property owner or~~ mortgage holder, the municipality shall obtain a receipt of mailing from the postal service, which receipt shall indicate the date of mailing and the name and address of the mailee. A copy of the notice shall also be posted on the property to be affected. However, if neither the property owner nor mortgage holder can be located, notice may be given by posting a copy of the notice on the property or by publication as defined in Section 1-102 of this title. ~~Such~~ The

notice shall be published one time, not less than ten (10) days prior to any hearing or action by the municipality pursuant to the provisions of this section. If a municipal governing body anticipates summary abatement of a nuisance in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 9 of this subsection, the notice shall state: that any subsequent need for boarding and securing the building within a six-month period after the initial boarding and securing of the building pursuant to ~~such~~ the notice may be summarily boarded and secured by the municipal governing body; that the costs of ~~such~~ the boarding and securing shall be assessed against the owner; and that a lien may be imposed on the property to secure ~~such~~ the payment, all without further prior notice to the property owner or mortgage holder;

2. The owner of the property may give written consent to the municipality authorizing the boarding and securing of ~~such~~ the unsecured building and to the payment of any costs incurred thereby. By giving written consent, the owner waives any right the owner has to a hearing by the municipal governing body;

3. If the property owner does not give written consent to such actions, a hearing may be held by the municipal governing body to determine whether the boarding and securing of such unsecured building would promote and benefit the public health, safety or welfare. ~~Such~~ The hearing may be held in conjunction with a hearing on the accumulation of trash or the growth of weeds or grass on the premises of ~~such~~ the unsecured building held pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 3 of subsection A of Section 22-111 of this title. In making such determination, the governing body shall apply the following standard: the governing body may order the boarding and securing of the unsecured building when the boarding and securing thereof would make ~~such~~ the building less available for transient occupation, decrease a fire hazard created by ~~such~~ the

building, or decrease the hazard that ~~such~~ the building would constitute an attractive nuisance to children.

Upon making the required determination, the municipal governing body may order the boarding and securing of the unsecured building;

4. After the governing body orders the boarding and securing of ~~such~~ the unsecured building, the municipal clerk shall immediately file a notice of unsecured building and lien with the county clerk describing the property, stating the findings of the municipality at the hearing at which ~~such~~ the building was determined to be unsecured, and stating that the municipality claims a lien on the property for the costs of boarding and securing such building and that such costs are the personal obligation of the property owner from and after the date of filing the notice;

5. Pursuant to the order of the governing body, the agents of the municipality are granted the right of entry on the property for the performance of the boarding and securing of ~~such~~ the building and for the performance of all necessary duties as a governmental function of the municipality;

6. After an unsecured building has been boarded and secured, the governing body shall determine the actual costs of such actions and any other expenses that may be necessary in conjunction therewith including the cost of the notice and mailing. The municipal clerk shall forward a statement of the actual costs attributable to the boarding and securing of the unsecured building and a demand for payment of such costs, by mail to any property owners and mortgage holders as provided in Section 22-112 of this title. At the time of mailing of the statement of costs to any property owner or mortgage holder, the municipality shall obtain a receipt of mailing from the postal service, which receipt shall indicate the date of mailing and the name and address of the mailee.

If a municipality boards and secures any unsecured building, the cost to the property owner shall not exceed the actual cost of the

labor, materials and equipment required for the performance of such actions. If such actions are done on a private contract basis, the contract shall be awarded to the lowest and best bidder;

7. When payment is made to the municipality for costs incurred, the municipal clerk shall file a release of lien, but if payment attributable to the actual costs of the boarding and securing of the unsecured building is not made within thirty (30) days from the date of the mailing of the statement to the owner of such property, the municipal clerk shall forward a certified statement of the amount of the costs to the county treasurer of the county in which the property is located. The costs shall be levied on the property and collected by the county treasurer as are other taxes authorized by law. Until fully paid, the costs and the interest thereon shall be the personal obligation of the property owner from and after the date the notice of unsecured building and lien is filed with the county clerk. In addition the costs and the interest thereon shall be a lien against the property from the date the notice of the lien is filed with the county clerk. The lien shall be coequal with the lien of ad valorem taxes and all other taxes and special assessments and shall be prior and superior to all other titles and liens against the property. The lien shall continue until the costs and interest are fully paid. At any time prior to collection as provided for in this paragraph, the municipality may pursue any civil remedy for collection of the amount owing and interest thereon including an action in personam against the property owner and an action in rem to foreclose its lien against the property. A mineral interest if severed from the surface owner, shall not be subject to any tax or judgment lien created pursuant to this section. Upon receiving payment, the municipal clerk shall forward to the county treasurer a notice of such payment and shall direct discharge of the lien;

8. The municipality may designate by ordinance an administrative officer or administrative body to carry out the duties of the governing body specified in this subsection ~~C of this section~~. The property owner or mortgage holder shall have a right of appeal to the municipal governing body from any order of the administrative officer or administrative body. ~~Such~~ The appeal shall be taken by filing written notice of appeal with the municipal clerk within ten (10) days after the administrative order is rendered;

9. If a municipal governing body causes a structure within the municipal limits to be boarded and secured, any subsequent need for boarding and securing within a six-month period constitutes a public nuisance and may be summarily boarded and secured without further prior notice to the property owner or mortgage holder. At the time of each ~~such~~ summary boarding and securing, the municipality shall notify the property owner and mortgage holder of the boarding and securing and the costs thereof. The notice shall state that the property owner may request an appeal with the municipal clerk within ten (10) days after the mailing of the notice. The notice and hearing shall be as provided for in paragraph 1 of this subsection. Unless otherwise determined at the hearing the cost of such boarding and securing shall be determined and collected as provided for in paragraphs 6 and 7 of this subsection;

10. A governing body of any municipality may determine that a building is unsecured and order that such building be boarded and secured in the manner provided for in this subsection even though such building has not been declared, by the governing body, to be dilapidated; and

11. For the purposes of this subsection:

- a. "boarding and securing" or "boarded and secured" means the closing, boarding or locking of any or all

exterior openings so as to prevent entry into the structure,

- b. "unsecured building" shall mean any structure which is not occupied by a legal or equitable owner thereof, or by a lessee of a legal or equitable owner, and into which there are one or more unsecured openings such as broken windows, unlocked windows, broken doors, unlocked doors, holes in exterior walls, holes in the roof, broken basement or cellar hatchways, unlocked basement or cellar hatchways or other similar unsecured openings which would facilitate an unauthorized entry into the structure, and
- c. "unfit for human occupancy" means a structure that due to lack of necessary repairs is considered uninhabitable and is a hazard to the health, safety, and welfare of the general public.

D. The provisions of this section shall not apply to any property zoned and used for agricultural purposes.

SECTION 4. AMENDATORY Section 1, Chapter 170, O.S.L. 1997 (11 O.S. Supp. 1997, Section 22-112.2), is amended to read as follows:

Section 22-112.2 A. A municipal governing body may cause graffiti to be removed from property within the municipal limits in accordance with the following procedures:

1. The property owner and the tenant, if any, may give their written consent to the municipality authorizing removal of the graffiti. By giving such written consent, the owner and the tenant each waives the right to notice and a hearing by the municipality as otherwise required by this section;
2. If the consent of the property owner and the tenant, if any, to remove graffiti from the property cannot be obtained, the

municipality may remove the graffiti without such consent pursuant to the procedures set forth in this section;

3. To remove graffiti from property without the consent of the property owner and the tenant, if any, at least ten (10) days' notice shall be given by certified mail with return receipt requested directed to the address shown by the current year's tax rolls in the county treasurer's office. Notice to the tenant, if any, shall be given by certified mail with return receipt requested directed to the property address. The notice shall order the property owner and the tenant, if any, to remove graffiti from the property and shall further state that unless such work is performed within twenty (20) days of the date of the notice the work shall be done by the municipality. ~~At the time of mailing of notice to the property owner and the tenant, if any, the municipality shall obtain a receipt of mailing from the postal service, which receipt shall indicate the date of mailing and the name and address of the mailee(s).~~ In addition, notice shall be given by posting a copy of the notice on the property at least one time not less than ten (10) days prior to any hearing or action by the municipality. If a municipal governing body anticipates summary abatement of graffiti in accordance with the provisions of subsection B of this section, the notice shall state that any accumulations of graffiti on the property occurring within one (1) year from and after the date of the notice may be summarily abated by the municipality without a hearing and further prior notice to the property owner or the tenant, if any, except by posting of notice at least one time on the property once not less than two (2) business days prior to such summary abatement;

4. A hearing may be held by the municipal governing body to determine whether the accumulation of graffiti on the property has caused the property to become detrimental or a hazard to the health, safety, or general welfare of the public and the community;

5. Upon finding that the condition of the property constitutes a detriment or hazard, and that the property, the public, and the community would be benefited by removal of such conditions, the agents of the municipality are granted the right of entry onto the property for the removal of the graffiti thereon and for performance of the necessary duties as a governmental function of the municipality; and

6. The municipality may designate by ordinance an administrative officer or administrative body to perform the functions set forth in this section. The property owner and the tenant, if any, shall have a right of appeal to the municipal governing body from any order of the administrative officer or administrative body. Such appeal shall be taken by filing written notice of appeal with the municipal clerk within ten (10) business days after the administrative order is rendered.

B. If a notice is given by a municipal governing body to a property owner and tenant, if any, ordering graffiti to be removed from property within the municipal limits in accordance with the procedures provided for in subsection A of this section, any subsequent accumulations of graffiti on the property occurring within a one (1) year period may be summarily abated without further prior notice to the property owner or the tenant, if any. However, prior to the summary abatement by the municipality, notice thereof shall be posted at least one time on the property not less than two (2) business days prior to such summary abatement. This subsection shall not apply if the records of the county clerk show that the ownership and/or tenancy of the property was transferred after notice was given pursuant to subsection A of this section.

C. Removal of graffiti by a municipality pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be performed at the sole expense of the municipality. In removing the graffiti, the municipality shall restore the property as nearly as possible to the condition as it

existed immediately prior to the graffiti being placed on the property.

D. Nothing in the provisions of this section shall prevent the municipality from abating graffiti as a nuisance or otherwise exercising its police power to protect the health, safety, or general welfare of the public.

E. The municipality and its officers, employees or agents shall not be liable for any damages or loss of property due to the removal of graffiti performed pursuant to the provisions of this section.

F. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the municipal governing body from enacting ordinances concerning the removal of graffiti that are more strict than this section.

G. For the purposes of this section:

1. "Advertising" means any letter, word, name, number, symbol, slogan, message, drawing, picture, writing, or other mark of any kind lawfully placed on property by an owner or tenant of the property, or an agent of such owner or tenant, for the purpose of promoting products or services or conveying information to the public;

2. "Graffiti" means, without limitation, any letter, word, name, number, symbol, slogan, message, drawing, picture, writing, or other mark of any kind visible to the public that is drawn, painted, chiseled, scratched or etched on a rock, tree, wall, bridge, fence, gate, building or other structure; provided, this definition shall not include advertising or any other letter, word, name, number, symbol, slogan, message, drawing, picture, writing, or other mark of any kind lawfully placed on property by an owner of the property, a tenant of the property, or by an authorized agent for such owner or tenant;

3. "Owner" means the owner of record as shown by the most current tax rolls of the county treasurer;

4. "Removal", "remove", or "removed", when used in relation to the eradication of graffiti means the act of taking graffiti off of, or masking the presence of graffiti on, a rock, tree, wall, bridge, fence, gate, building or other structure; and

5. "Tenant" means any person shown by the records of the county clerk's office as a lessee of property, or any person lawfully in actual physical possession of property.

SECTION 5. This act shall become effective November 1, 1998.

46-2-8984

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