

**ORDINANCE #2014-8**

**“REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES BOROUGH OF HIGH BRIDGE”, TO BE ENTITLED  
“NUISANCES, PUBLIC HEALTH” UTILIZING NEW CHAPTER 276, TO BE ENTITLED  
“MAINTENANCE OF VACANT / ABANDONED PROPERTIES”**

**WHEREAS**, the Borough of High Bridge (the “Borough”) contains structures which are vacant in whole or large part; and

**WHEREAS**, in many cases, the owners or responsible parties of these structures are neglectful of them, are not maintaining or securing them to an adequate standard or restoring them to productive use; and

**WHEREAS**, it has been established that vacant and abandoned structures cause severe harm to the health, safety and general welfare of the community, including diminution of neighboring property values, increased risk of fire and potential increases in criminal activity and public health risks; and

**WHEREAS**, the Borough incurs disproportionate costs in order to deal with the problems of vacant and abandoned structures, including but not limited to, excessive police calls, fire calls and property inspections; and

**WHEREAS**, it is in the public interest for the Borough to establish minimum standards of accountability on the owners or other responsible parties of vacant and abandoned structures in order to protect the health, safety and general welfare of the residents of the Borough; and

**WHEREAS**, it is in the public interest for the Borough to impose a fee in conjunction with registration of vacant and abandoned structures in light of the disproportionate costs imposed on the Borough by the presence of these structures.

**Article I. Chapter 276      MAINTENANCE OF VACANT / ABANDONED PROPERTIES**

**276-1            DEFINITIONS.**

**OWNER-** shall include the title holder, any agent of the title holder having authority to act with respect to a vacant property, any foreclosing entity subject to the provisions C.46:10B-51 (P.L. 2008, c. 127, Sec. 17 as amended by P.L. 2009, c. 296), or any other entity determined by the Borough of High Bridge to have authority to act with respect to the property.

**VACANT PROPERTY-** any building used or to be used as a residence which is not legally occupied or at which substantially all lawful construction operations or residential occupancy has ceased, and which is in such condition that it cannot legally be reoccupied without repair or rehabilitation, including but not limited to any property meeting the definition of abandoned property in N.J.S.A. 55:19-80; provided, however, that any property where all building systems are in working order, where the building and grounds are maintained in good order, or where the building is in habitable condition, and where the building is being actively marketed by its owner for sale or rental, shall not be deemed a vacant property for purposes of this ordinance.

**276-2            REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS.**

Effective upon passage of ordinance, the owner of any vacant property as defined herein shall, within 30 calendar days after the building becomes vacant property or within 30 calendar days after assuming ownership of the vacant property, whichever is later; or within 10 calendar days of receipt of notice by the municipality, file a registration statement for such vacant property with the Zoning Officer on forms provided by the Borough for such purposes. Failure to receive notice by the municipality shall not constitute grounds for failing to register the property.

- a. Each property having a separate block and lot number as designated in official records of the municipality shall be registered separately.
- b. The registration statement shall include the name, street address, telephone number, and email address (if applicable) of a person 21 years or older, designated by the owner or owners as the authorized agent for receiving notices of code violations and for receiving process in any court proceeding or administrative enforcement proceeding on behalf of such owner or owners in connection with the enforcement of any applicable code; and the name, street address, telephone number, and email address (if applicable) of the firm and the actual name(s) of the firms individual principal(s) responsible for maintaining the property. The individual or representative of the firm responsible for maintaining the property shall be available by telephone or in person on a 24 hour per day, seven-day per week basis. The two entities may be the same or different persons. Both entities shown on the statement must maintain offices in the state of New Jersey or reside within the state of New Jersey.
- c. The registration shall remain valid for one year from the date of registration except for the initial registration time which shall be pro-rated through December 31. The owner shall be required to renew the registration annually as long as the building remains a vacant property and shall pay a registration or renewal fee in the amount prescribed in Section 15-21.5 of this ordinance, for each vacant property registered. The owner shall be required to renew the registration annually as long as the building remains a vacant property and shall pay a registration or renewal fee in the amount prescribed in Section 15-21.5 of this ordinance, for each vacant property registered.
- d. The annual renewal shall be completed by January 1st each year. The initial registration fee shall be pro-rated for registration statements received less than 10 months prior to that date.
- e. The owner shall notify the Clerk within 30 calendar days of any change in the registration information by filing an amended registration statement on a form provided by the Clerk for such purpose.
- f. The registration statement shall be deemed prima facie proof of the statements therein contained in any administrative enforcement proceeding or court proceeding instituted by the Borough against the owner or owners of the building.

### **276-3 ACCESS TO VACANT PROPERTIES.**

The owner of any vacant property registered under this Article shall provide access to the Borough to conduct exterior and interior inspections of the building to determine compliance with municipal codes, upon reasonable notice to the property owner or the designated agent. Such inspections shall be carried out on weekdays during the hours of 9:00 am and 4:00 pm, or such other time as may be mutually agreed upon between the owner and the Borough.

### **276-4 RESPONSIBLE OWNER OR AGENT.**

- a. An owner who meets the requirements of this Article with respect to the location of his or her residence or workplace in the State of New Jersey may designate him or herself as agent or as the individual responsible for maintaining the property.

- b. By designating an authorized agent under the provisions of this section the owner consents to receive any and all notices of code violations concerning the registered vacant property and all process in any court proceeding or administrative enforcement proceeding brought to enforce code provisions concerning the registered building by service of the notice or process on the authorized agent. Any owner who has designated an authorized agent under the provisions of this section shall be deemed to consent to the continuation of the agent’s designation for the purposes of this section until the owner notifies the Borough of High Bridge in writing of a change of authorized agent or until the owner files a new annual registration statement.
- c. Any owner who fails to register vacant property under the provisions of this Article shall further be deemed to consent to receive, by posting on the building, in plain view, and by service of notice at the last known address of the owner of the property on record within the Borough of High Bridge by regular and certified mail, any and all notices of code violations and all process in an administrative proceeding brought to enforce code provisions concerning the building.

**276-5 FEE SCHEDULE.**

The initial registration fee for each building shall be five-hundred dollars (\$500.00). The fee for the first renewal is one-thousand-five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00), and the fee for the second renewal is three-thousand dollars (\$3,000.00). The fee for any subsequent renewal beyond the second renewal is five-thousand dollars (\$5,000.00).

**Vacant Property Registration Fee Schedule.**

Initial Registration	\$ 500.00
First Renewal	\$1,500.00
Second renewal	\$3,000.00
Subsequent renewal	\$5,000.00

**276-6 REQUIREMENTS OF OWNERS OF VACANT PROPERTY.**

The owner of any building that has become vacant property, and any person maintaining or operating or collecting rent for any such building that has become vacant shall, within thirty (30) days thereof:

- (1) Enclose and secure the building against unauthorized entry as provided in the applicable provisions of the Borough Code, or as set forth in the rules and regulations supplementing those codes; and
- (2) Post a sign affixed to the building indicating the name, address and telephone number of the owner, the owner’s authorized agent for the purpose of service of process (if designated pursuant to subsection 145-45 of this Article), and the person responsible for the day-to-day supervision and management of the building, if such person is different from the owner holding title or authorized agent. The sign shall be of a size and placed in such a location so as to be legible from the nearest public street or sidewalk, whichever is nearer, but shall be no smaller than eight (8) inches by ten (10) inches; and
- (3) Secure the building from unauthorized entry and maintain the sign until the building is again legally occupied or demolished or until repair or rehabilitation of the building is complete; and
- (4) Ensure that the exterior grounds of the structure, including yards, fences, sidewalks, walkways, right-of-ways, alleys, retaining walls, attached or unattached accessory structures and driveways, are well-maintained and free from trash, debris, loose litter, and grass and weed growth; and
- (5) Continue to maintain the structure in a secure and closed condition, keep the grounds in a clean and well-maintained condition, and ensure that the sign is visible and intact until the

building is again occupied, demolished, or until repair and/or rehabilitation of the building is complete.

## **276-7 VIOLATIONS.**

- a. Any person who violates any provision of this Article or of the rules and regulations issued hereunder shall be fined not less than \$100.00 and not more than \$1,000.00 for each offense. Every day that a violation continues shall constitute a separate and distinct offense. Fines assessed under this chapter shall be recoverable from the owner and shall be a lien on the property.
- b. For purposes of this section, failure to file a registration statement within 30 calendar days after a building becomes vacant property or within 30 calendar days after assuming ownership of a vacant property, whichever is later, or within 10 calendar days of receipt of notice by the municipality, and failure to provide correct information on the registration statement, or failure to comply with the provisions of such provisions contained herein shall be deemed to be violations of this ordinance.

## **Article II.**

Should any section, paragraph, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance be declared unconstitutional or invalid for any reason, the remaining portions of this ordinance shall not be affected thereby and shall remain in full force and effect, and to that end the provisions of this ordinance are hereby declared to be severable.

## **Article III.**

All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent with this amending ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of their inconsistencies only.

This ordinance shall take effect twenty (20) days after passage and publication, as required by law.

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**Mark Desire, Mayor**

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**Diane L. Seals, Municipal Clerk, RMC**