

Article 26.

Collection and Foreclosure of Taxes.

§ 105-349. Appointment, term, qualifications, and bond of tax collectors and deputies.

(a) Appointment and Term. – The governing body of each county and municipality shall appoint a tax collector on or before July 1, 1971, to serve for a term to be determined by the appointing body and until his successor has been appointed and qualified. Until the first such appointments are made, county and municipal taxes shall be collected by the tax collectors presently serving under prior provisions of law. The governing body may remove the tax collector from office during his term for good cause after giving him notice in writing and an opportunity to appear and be heard at a public session of the governing body. No hearing shall be required, however, if the tax collector is removed for failing to meet the prerequisites prescribed by G.S. 105-352(b) for delivery of the tax receipts. Unless otherwise provided by G.S. 105-373, whenever any vacancy occurs in this office, the governing body shall appoint a qualified person to serve as tax collector for the period of the unexpired term.

(b) Qualifications. – The governing body shall appoint as tax collector a person of character and integrity whose experience in business and collection work is satisfactory to the governing body.

(c) Bond. – No tax collector shall be allowed to begin his duties until he shall have furnished bond conditioned upon his honesty and faithful performance in such amount as the governing body may prescribe. A tax collector shall not be permitted to collect any taxes not covered by his bond, nor shall a tax collector be permitted to continue collecting taxes after his bond has expired without renewal.

(d) Compensation. – The compensation and expense allowances of the tax collector shall be fixed by the governing body.

(e) Alternative to Separate Office of Tax Collector. – Pursuant to Article VI, Sec. 9, of the North Carolina Constitution, the office of tax collector is hereby declared to be an office that may be held concurrently with any appointive or elective office other than those hereinafter designated, and the governing body may appoint as tax collector any appointive or elective officer who meets the personal and bonding requirements established by this section. A member of the governing body of a taxing unit may not be appointed tax collector, nor may the duties of the office be conferred upon him. A person appointed or elected as the treasurer or chief accounting officer of a taxing unit may not be appointed tax collector, nor may the duties of the office of tax collector be conferred upon him except with the written permission of the secretary of the Local Government Commission who, before giving his permission, shall satisfy himself that the unit's internal control procedures are sufficient to prevent improper handling of public funds.

(f) Deputy Tax Collectors. – The governing body of a county or municipality is authorized to appoint one or more deputy tax collectors and to establish their terms of office, compensation, and bonding requirements. A deputy tax collector shall have authority to perform, under the direction of the tax collector, any act that the tax collector may perform unless the governing body appointing the deputy specifically limits the scope of the deputy's authority.

(g) Oath. – Every tax collector and deputy tax collector, as the holder of an office, shall take the oath required by Article VI, § 7 of the North Carolina Constitution with the following phrase added to it: "that I will not allow my actions as tax collector to be influenced by personal or political friendships or obligations,". The oath must be filed with the clerk of the governing body of the taxing unit. (1939, c. 310, ss. 1701, 1702; 1957, c. 537; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1991, c. 110, s. 6; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1007, s. 23.)

§ 105-350. General duties of tax collectors.

It shall be the duty of each tax collector:

- (1) To employ all lawful means to collect all property, dog, license, privilege, and franchise taxes with which he is charged by the governing body.
- (2) To give such bond as may be required of him by the governing body under the provisions of G.S. 105-349.
- (3) To perform such duties in connection with the preparation of the tax records and tax receipts as the governing body may direct under the provisions of G.S. 105-319 and 105-320.
- (4) To keep adequate records of all collections he makes.
- (5) To account for all moneys coming into his hands in such form and detail as may be required by the chief accounting officer of the taxing unit.
- (6) To make settlement at the times required by G.S. 105-373 and at any other time the governing body may require him to do so.
- (7) To submit to the governing body at each of its regular meetings a report of the amount he has collected on each year's taxes with which he is charged, the amount remaining uncollected, and the steps he is taking to encourage or enforce payment of uncollected taxes.
- (8) To send bills or notices of taxes due to taxpayers if instructed to do so by the governing body.
- (9) To visit delinquent taxpayers to encourage payment of taxes if instructed to do so by the governing body. (1939, c. 310, s. 1703; 1971, c. 806, s. 1.)

§ 105-351. Authority of successor collector.

The successor in office of any tax collector may continue and complete any legally authorized process or proceeding begun by his predecessor for the collection of taxes. (1939, c. 310, s. 1703; 1971, c. 806, s. 1.)

§ 105-352. Delivery of tax receipts to tax collector; prerequisites; procedure upon default.

(a) Time of Delivery. – As provided in G.S. 105-321, upon order of the governing body, the tax receipts shall be delivered to the tax collector on or before the first day of September.

(b) Settlement, Bond, and Prepayments. – Before the tax receipts for the current year are delivered to the tax collector, he shall have:

- (1) Delivered to the chief accounting officer of the taxing unit the duplicate receipts issued for prepayments received by the tax collector.
- (2) Demonstrated to the satisfaction of the chief accounting officer that all moneys received by the tax collector as prepayments have been deposited to the credit of the taxing unit.
- (3) Made his annual settlement (as defined in G.S. 105-373) for all taxes in his hands for collection.
- (4) Provided bond or bonds as required by G.S. 105-349(c) for taxes for the current year and all prior years in his hands for collection. (In no event shall the governing body accept a bond of lesser amount than that prescribed by any local act applying to the taxing unit.)

In the event prepayments have been received by a person other than the regular tax collector, that person shall, before the tax receipts are delivered to the tax collector, deliver the prepayment receipt duplicates to the chief accounting officer and demonstrate to the satisfaction of that officer that all moneys received by him as prepayments have been deposited to the credit of the taxing unit. If the chief accounting officer has accepted prepayments, he shall not later than the day on which the tax receipts are delivered to the tax collector, make settlement with the governing body in such manner and form as the governing body may prescribe.

(c) Procedure upon Default. – If, when the tax receipts for the current year have been computed and prepared, the regular tax collector shall not have met the requirements of subsection (b), above, the governing body shall immediately appoint a special tax collector and, after he has given satisfactory bond for the full amount of the taxes as required by G.S. 105-349(c), deliver to him the tax receipts for the current year and order him to make collections as provided in G.S. 105-321. In the discretion of the governing body, the cost of the special tax collector's bond and compensation may be deducted from the compensation of the regular tax collector. If the regular tax collector shall thereafter meet the requirements of subsection (b), above, the special collector shall make full settlement (in the manner provided in G.S. 105-373 for tax collectors retiring from office), and the governing body, as provided in G.S. 105-321, shall deliver the tax receipts for the current year to the regular tax collector and order their collection.

(d) Civil and Criminal Penalties. –

- (1) Any member of the governing body who shall vote to deliver the tax receipts to a tax collector before the tax collector has met the requirements prescribed by this section shall be individually liable for the amount of taxes charged against the tax collector for which he has not made satisfactory settlement; and any member of the governing body who so votes, or who willfully fails to perform any duty imposed by this section, shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.
- (2) Any tax collector or other official who fails to account for prepayments as prescribed by this section shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. (1939, c. 310, s. 1707; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, s. 722; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

§ 105-353. Place for collection of taxes.

Taxes shall be payable at the office of the tax collector or at a financial institution with which the taxing unit has contracted for receipt of payment of taxes. For the convenience of taxpayers, the governing body may require the tax collector to be present to collect taxes in person or by deputy at other designated places within the taxing unit at times prescribed by the governing body. If the governing body exercises this authority, the tax collector shall give timely notice of the places and times at which he will be present for collection; this notice shall be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the taxing unit and posted at three or more public places within the taxing unit. (1939, c. 310, s. 1712; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1989, c. 578, s. 2.)

§ 105-354. Collections for districts and other units of local government.

Whenever a taxing unit collects taxes for some district or other unit of local government, those taxes, for collection and foreclosure purposes, shall be treated as taxes of the taxing unit making the collection. (1971, c. 806, s. 1.)

§ 105-355. Creation of tax lien; date as of which lien attaches.

(a) Lien on Real Property. – Regardless of the time at which liability for a tax for a given fiscal year may arise or the exact amount thereof be determined, the lien for taxes levied on a parcel of real property shall attach to the parcel taxed on the date as of which property is to be listed under G.S. 105-285, and the lien for taxes levied on personal property shall attach to all real property of the taxpayer in the taxing unit on the same date. All penalties, interest, and costs allowed by law shall be added to the amount of the lien and shall be regarded as attaching at the same time as the lien for the principal amount of the taxes. For purposes of this subsection (a):

- (1) Taxes levied on real property listed in the name of a life tenant under G.S. 105-302 (c)(8) shall be a lien on the fee as well as the life estate.
- (2) Taxes levied on improvements on or separate rights in real property owned by one other than the owner of the land, whether or not listed separately from the land under G.S. 105-302 (c)(11), shall be a lien on both the improvements or rights and on the land.

(b) Lien on Personal Property. – Taxes levied on real and personal property (including penalties, interest, and costs allowed by law) shall be a lien on personal property from and after levy or attachment and garnishment of the personal property levied upon or attached. (1939, c. 310, s. 1704; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 564, s. 4.)

§ 105-356. Priority of tax liens.

(a) On Real Property. – The lien of taxes imposed on real and personal property shall attach to real property at the time prescribed in G.S. 105-355(a). The priority of that lien shall be determined in accordance with the following rules:

- (1) Subject to the provisions of the Revenue Act prescribing the priority of the lien for State taxes, the lien of taxes imposed under the provisions of this Subchapter shall be superior to all other liens, assessments, charges, rights, and claims of any and every kind in and to the real property to which the lien for taxes attaches regardless of the claimant and regardless of whether acquired prior or subsequent to the attachment of the lien for taxes. For purposes of this subdivision, the term "lien for State taxes" includes a lien for contributions under G.S. 96-10.
- (2) The liens of taxes of all taxing units shall be of equal dignity.
- (3) The priority of the lien for taxes shall not be affected by transfer of title to the real property after the lien has attached, nor shall it be affected by the death, receivership, or bankruptcy of the owner of the real property to which the lien attaches.

(b) On Personal Property. – The lien of taxes on real and personal property shall attach to personal property at the time prescribed in G.S. 105-355(b). The priority of that lien shall be determined in accordance with the following rules:

- (1) The tax lien, when it attaches to personal property, shall, insofar as it represents taxes imposed upon the property to which the lien attaches, be superior to all other liens and rights whether such other liens and rights are prior or subsequent to the tax lien in point of time.
- (2) The tax lien, when it attaches to personal property, shall, insofar as it represents taxes imposed upon property other than that to which the lien attaches, be inferior to prior valid liens and perfected security interests and superior to all subsequent liens and security interests.

- (3) As between the tax liens of different taxing units, the tax lien first attaching shall be superior. (1939, c. 310, s. 1704; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 2020-3, s. 1.4(b).)

§ 105-357. Payment of taxes.

(a) **Medium of Payment.** – Taxes shall be payable in existing national currency. Deeds to real property, notes of the taxpayer or others, bonds or notes of the taxing unit, and payments in kind shall not be accepted in payment of taxes. A taxing unit may not permit the payment of taxes by offset of any bill, claim, judgment, or other obligation owed to the taxpayer by the taxing unit. The prohibition against payment of taxes by offset does not apply to offset of an obligation arising from a lease or another contract entered into between the taxpayer and the taxing unit before July 1 of the fiscal year for which the unpaid taxes were levied.

(b) **Acceptance of Checks and Electronic Payment.** – The tax collector may accept checks and electronic payments, as defined in G.S. 147-86.20, in payment of taxes, as authorized by G.S. 159-32.1. Acceptance of a check or electronic payment is at the tax collector's own risk. A tax collector who accepts electronic payment of taxes may add a fee to each electronic payment transaction to offset the service charge the taxing unit pays for electronic payment service. A tax collector who accepts electronic payment or check in payment of taxes may issue the tax receipt immediately or withhold the receipt until the check has been collected or the electronic payment invoice has been honored by the issuer.

If a tax collector accepts a check or an electronic payment and issues a tax receipt and the check is returned unpaid (without negligence on the part of the tax collector in presenting the check for payment) or the electronic payment invoice is not honored by the issuer, the taxes for which the check or electronic payment was given shall be deemed unpaid; the tax collector shall immediately correct the copy of the tax receipt and other appropriate records to show the fact of nonpayment, and shall give written notice by certified or registered mail to the person to whom the tax receipt was issued to return it to the tax collector. After correcting the records to show the fact of nonpayment, the tax collector shall proceed to collect the taxes by the use of any remedies allowed for the collection of taxes or by bringing a civil action on the check or electronic payment.

A financial institution with which a taxing unit has contracted for receipt of payment of taxes may accept a check in payment of taxes. If the check is honored, the financial institution shall so notify the tax collector, who shall, upon request of the taxpayer, issue a receipt for payment of the taxes. If the check is returned unpaid, the financial institution shall so notify the tax collector, who shall proceed to collect the taxes by use of any remedy allowed for collection of taxes or by bringing a civil action on the check.

- (1) **Effect on Tax Lien.** – If the tax collector accepts a check or electronic payment in payment of taxes on real property and issues the receipt, and the check is later returned unpaid or the electronic payment invoice is not honored by the issuer, the taxing unit's lien for taxes on the real property shall be inferior to the rights of purchasers for value and of persons acquiring liens of record for value if the purchasers or lienholders acquire their rights in good faith and without actual knowledge that the check has not been collected or the electronic payment invoice has not been honored, after examination of the copy of the tax receipt in the tax collector's office during the time that record showed the taxes as paid or after examination of the official receipt issued to the taxpayer prior to the date on which the tax collector notified the taxpayer to return the receipt.

- (2) Penalty. – In addition to interest for nonpayment of taxes provided by G.S. 105-360 and in addition to any criminal penalties provided by law, the penalty for presenting in payment of taxes a check or electronic funds transfer that is returned or not completed because of insufficient funds or nonexistence of an account of the drawer or transferor is twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) or ten percent (10%) of the amount of the check or electronic invoice, whichever is greater, subject to a maximum of one thousand dollars (\$1,000). This penalty does not apply if the tax collector finds that, when the check or electronic funds transfer was presented for payment, the drawer of the check or transferor of funds had sufficient funds in an account at a financial institution in this State to make the payment and, by inadvertence, the drawer of the check or transferor of the funds failed to draw the check or initiate a transfer on the account that had sufficient funds. This penalty shall be added to and collected in the same manner as the taxes for which the check or electronic payment was given.

(c) Small Underpayments and Overpayments. – The governing body of a taxing unit may, by resolution, permit its tax collector to treat small underpayments of taxes as fully paid and to not refund small overpayments of taxes unless the taxpayer requests a refund before the end of the fiscal year in which the small overpayment is made. A "small underpayment" is a payment made, other than in person, that is no more than one dollar (\$1.00) less than the taxes due on a tax receipt. A "small overpayment" is a payment made, other than in person, that is no more than one dollar (\$1.00) greater than the taxes due on a tax receipt.

The tax collector shall keep records of all underpayments and overpayments of taxes by receipt number and amount and shall report these payments to the governing body as part of his settlement.

A resolution authorizing adjustments of underpayments and overpayments as provided in this subsection shall:

- (1) Be adopted on or before June 15 of the year to which it is to apply;
- (2) Apply to taxes levied for all previous fiscal years; and
- (3) Continue in effect until repealed or amended by resolution of the taxing unit. (1939, c. 310, s. 1710; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1987, c. 661; 1989, c. 578, s. 3; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 1005, s. 8; 1991, c. 584, s. 2; 1999-434, s. 6; 2001-487, s. 25; 2002-156, s. 1; 2005-134, s. 1; 2005-313, s. 10.)

§ 105-358. Waiver of penalties; partial payments.

(a) Waiver. – A tax collector may, upon making a record of the reasons therefor, reduce or waive the penalty imposed on giving a worthless check under G.S. 105-357(b)(2).

(b) Partial Payments. – Unless otherwise directed by the governing body, the tax collector shall accept partial payments on taxes and issue partial payment receipts therefor.

When a payment is made on the tax for any year or on any installment, it shall first be applied to accrued penalties, interest, and costs and then to the principal amount of the tax or installment. In its discretion, the governing body may prescribe by uniform regulation the minimum amount or percentage of tax liability that may be accepted as a partial payment. (1939, c. 310, ss. 1708, 1709; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 2002-156, s. 1.2; 2003-416, s. 10.)

§ 105-359. Prepayments.

(a) To Whom Made. – Payments of taxes made before the tax receipts have been delivered to the tax collector, herein referred to as prepayments, shall be made to the regular tax collector

unless the governing body shall have designated some other person to receive them. The regular tax collector or person named to receive prepayments shall give bond satisfactory to the governing body.

(b) When Accepted. – No taxing unit shall be required to accept any tender of prepayment until the annual budget estimate has been filed as required by law.

(c) Estimation of Liability; Overpayment and Underpayment. – If the tax rate has not been finally fixed or if the assessed valuation of the taxpayer's property has not been finally determined at the time a prepayment is tendered, the tax collector shall compute the amount of the tax liability on the basis of the best information available to him. If it is later ascertained that there has been an overpayment, the excess (without interest) shall be refunded by the taxing unit. If it is later ascertained that there was an underpayment, the unpaid balance of the tax shall be due, and the balance due shall be allowed the discount or charged the interest in effect with respect to taxes for the same year at the time the balance is paid.

(d) Receipts. – A receipt issued for a prepayment made on the basis of an estimate of the tax rate or assessed valuation shall so state, and such a receipt shall not release property from the tax lien created by G.S. 105-355(a). An official and final receipt shall be made available to the taxpayer as soon as possible after determination that the tax has been fully paid.

(e) Duties of Chief Accounting Officer. – It shall be the duty of the chief accounting officer of the taxing unit to:

- (1) Secure and retain in his office, available to taxpayers upon request, the official receipts for taxes paid in full by prepayment.
- (2) Credit on the tax receipts to be delivered to the tax collector all taxes that have been paid in full or in part by prepayment.
- (3) Prepare and deliver refunds for overpayments made by way of prepayment.
- (4) Reduce the charge to be made against the tax collector by deducting from the total amount of taxes levied so much of the amount received as prepayments as is not required to be refunded under the provisions of subsection (c), above.

Any chief accounting officer who fails to perform the duties imposed upon him by this subsection (e) shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. (1939, c. 310, ss. 1706, 1707; 1969, c. 921, s. 2; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, s. 723; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

§ 105-360. Due date; interest for nonpayment of taxes; discounts for prepayment; interest on overpayment of tax.

(a) Taxes levied under this Subchapter by a taxing unit are due and payable on September 1 of the fiscal year for which the taxes are levied. Taxes are payable at par or face amount if paid before January 6 following the due date. Taxes paid on or after January 6 following the due date are subject to interest charges. Interest accrues on taxes paid on or after January 6 as follows:

- (1) For the period January 6 to February 1, interest accrues at the rate of two percent (2%).
- (2) For the period February 1 until the principal amount of the taxes, the accrued interest, and any penalties are paid, interest accrues at the rate of three-fourths of one percent (3/4%) a month or fraction thereof.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 1987, c. 93, s. 2.

(c) Under the conditions established by this subsection (c), the governing body of any county or municipality levying taxes under the provisions of this Subchapter shall have authority to

establish a schedule of discounts to be applied to taxes paid prior to the due date prescribed in subsection (a) above. To exercise this authority, the governing body shall:

- (1) Not later than the first day of May preceding the due date of the taxes to which it first applies, adopt a resolution or ordinance specifying the amounts of the discounts and the periods of time during which they are to be applicable.
- (2) Submit the resolution or ordinance to the Department of Revenue for approval.
- (3) Upon approval by the Department of Revenue, publish the discount schedule at least once in some newspaper having general circulation in the taxing unit.

When such a resolution or ordinance is submitted to the Department of Revenue, the Department may approve it or disapprove it in whole or in part if, in the opinion of the Department, the discounts or the periods of time for which discounts are allowed are excessive or unreasonable. Such a resolution or ordinance, once adopted and approved by the Department of Revenue, shall continue in effect until repealed. Nothing in this subsection (c) shall prevent the governing body of any taxing unit from providing by resolution that the schedule of discounts for prepayment of taxes in effect in the taxing unit on June 30, 1971, shall continue in effect through November 1, 1971, but no longer.

(d) For the purposes of computing discounts and interest, tax payments submitted by mail shall be deemed to be received as of the date shown on the postmark affixed by the United States Postal Service. If no date is shown on the postmark or if the postmark is not affixed by the United States Postal Service, the tax payment shall be deemed to be received when the payment is received in the office of the tax collector. In any dispute arising under this subsection, the burden of proof shall be on the taxpayer to show that the payment was timely made.

(e) When an order of the county board of equalization and review reduces the valuation of property or removes the property from the tax lists and, based on the order, the taxpayer has paid more tax than is due on the property, the taxpayer is entitled to receive interest on the overpayment in accordance with this subdivision. An overpayment of tax bears interest at the rate set under subsection (a) of this section from the date the interest begins to accrue until a refund is paid. Interest accrues from the later of the date the tax was paid and the date the tax would have been considered delinquent under G.S. 105-360. A refund is considered paid on a date determined by the governing body of the taxing unit that is no sooner than five days after a refund check is mailed. (1939, c. 310, s. 1403; 1943, c. 667; 1945, c. 247, s. 3; c. 1041; 1947, c. 888, s. 1; 1969, c. 921, s. 1; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 193; 1977, c. 327, s. 2; c. 630; 1979, c. 233, ss. 1, 2; 1987, c. 93, ss. 1, 2; 2008-35, s. 2.7; 2011-3, s. 3(a).)

§ 105-361. Statement of amount of taxes due.

(a) Duty to Furnish a Certificate. – On the request of a person who is listed in subdivision (1) of this subsection and who complies with subdivision (2) of this subsection, the tax collector must give the person a written certificate stating the amount of any taxes and special assessments owed for the current year and for any prior year and the amount of any deferred taxes and interest that would become due if a disqualifying event occurred.

- (1) Who may make request. – Any of the following persons may request the certificate:
 - a. An owner of the real property.
 - b. An occupant of the real property.
 - c. A person having a lien on the real property.
 - d. A person having a legal interest or estate in the real property.

- e. A person or firm having a contract to purchase or lease the property or a person or firm having contracted to make a loan secured by the real property.
 - f. The authorized agent or attorney of any person described in this subdivision.
- (2) Identification of property. – A person requesting a certificate with respect to taxes must specify the name of the person who listed the real property for taxation for each year for which the information is sought. A person requesting a certificate with respect to assessments must identify the real estate in the manner required by the tax collector.

(b) Reliance on the Certificate. – When a certificate has been issued as provided in subsection (a), above, all taxes and special assessments that have accrued against the property for the period covered by the certificate shall cease to be a lien against the property, except to the extent of taxes and special assessments stated to be due in the certificate, as to all persons, firms, and corporations obtaining such a certificate and their successors in interest who rely on the certificate:

- (1) By paying the amount of taxes and assessments stated therein to be a lien on the real property;
- (2) By purchasing or leasing the real property; or
- (3) By lending money secured by the real property.

The tax collector shall be liable on his bond for any loss to the taxing unit arising from an understatement of the tax and special assessment obligations in the preparation of a certificate furnished under this section.

(c) Penalty. – Any tax collector who fails or refuses to furnish a certificate when requested under the conditions prescribed in this section shall be liable for a penalty of fifty dollars (\$50.00) recoverable in a civil action by the person who made the request.

(d) Oral Statements. – An oral statement made by the tax collector as to the amount of taxes, special assessments, penalties, interest, and costs due on any real or personal property shall bind neither the tax collector nor the taxing unit.

(e) Internet. – If the taxing unit maintains an Internet web site on which current information on the amount of taxes, special assessments, penalties, interest, and costs due on any real or personal property is available, the governing body of the taxing unit may adopt an ordinance to allow a person to rely on information obtained from the web site as if it were a certificate issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. The ordinance may provide for disclaimers to be posted on the web site containing language notifying the person relying on the information contained in the web site about matters relevant to the information, such as the date on which the information was posted, the date as of which the information is current, and any special instructions and procedures for accessing the complete and accurate information. The ordinance may also provide for appropriate procedural provisions by which the tax collector may ensure full and accurate payment of all taxes, assessments, and obligations certified under this subsection.

A person who relies on the web site information must keep and present a copy of the information as necessary or appropriate, as if the copy were a certificate issued under subsection (a) of this section. The tax collector shall be liable on the tax collector's bond for any loss to the taxing unit arising from an understatement of the tax and special assessment obligations contained in the information available on the web site unless the taxing unit's ordinance provides the

disclaimers authorized by this subsection. (1939, c. 310, s. 1711; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 604; c. 1340; 2003-399, s. 1; 2009-445, s. 26.)

§ 105-362. Discharge of lien on real property.

(a) General Rule. – The tax lien on real property shall continue until the principal amount of the taxes plus penalties, interest, and costs allowed by law have been fully paid.

(b) Release of Separate Parcels from Tax Lien. –

(1) When the lien of taxes of any taxing unit for any year attaches to two or more parcels of real property owned by the same taxpayer, the lien may be discharged as to any parcel at any time prior to advertisement of tax foreclosure sale in accordance with either subdivision (b)(1)a or subdivision (b)(1)b:

a. Upon payment, by or on behalf of the listing taxpayer, of the taxes for the year on the parcel or parcels to be released, of the taxes for the year on the parcel or parcels to be released, plus all personal property taxes owed by the listing taxpayer for the same year.

b. Upon payment, by or on behalf of any person (other than the listing taxpayer) who has a legal interest in the parcel or parcels to be released, of the taxes for the year on the parcel or parcels to be released, plus a proportionate part of personal property taxes owed by the listing taxpayer for the same year. The proportionate part shall be a percentage of the personal property taxes equal to the percentage of the total assessed valuation of the taxpayer's real property in the taxing unit represented by the assessed valuation of the parcel or parcels to be released.

(2) When real property listed as one parcel is divided, a part thereof may be released as provided in subdivision (b)(1), above, after the assessed valuation of the part to be released has been determined and certified to the tax collector by the tax supervisor.

(3) It shall be the duty of the tax collector accepting a payment made under this subsection (b) for the purpose of releasing the tax lien from less than all of the taxpayer's real property:

a. To give the person making the payment a receipt setting forth a description of the real property released from the tax lien and bearing a statement that such property is being released from the tax lien.

b. To indicate on the tax receipts, tax records, and other official records of his office what real property has been released from the tax lien.

If the tax collector fails to issue the receipt or make the record entries required by this subdivision (3), the omission may be supplied at any time.

(4) When any parcel of real property has been released under the provisions of this subsection (b) from the lien of taxes of any taxing unit for any year, the property shall not thereafter be subject to the lien of any other regularly levied taxes of the same taxing unit for the same year, whether such other taxes be levied against the listing owner of the property or against some other person acquiring title thereto. No tax foreclosure judgment for such other taxes shall become a lien on the released property; and, upon appropriate request and satisfactory proof of the release by any interested person, the clerk of the superior court shall

indicate on the judgment docket that the judgment is not a lien on the released property. However, the failure to make such an entry shall not have the effect of making the judgment a lien on the released property. (1939, c. 310, s. 1704; 1971, c. 806, s. 1.)

§ 105-363. Remedies of cotenants and joint owners of real property.

(a) **Payment of Taxes on Share of One Cotenant.** – Any one of several tenants in common or joint tenants (other than copartners) of real property may pay that portion of the taxes, interest, and costs that are a lien upon his undivided share of the property and thereby release the tax lien from his share. Thereafter, in any partition sale of the property the share of the joint owner who has paid his portion of the taxes shall be set apart free from the tax lien, and his share of the proceeds of any sale shall not be diminished by disbursements to pay any taxes, interest, or costs. In the event the tax lien is foreclosed and the property is sold for failure to pay taxes, the share of any joint owner who has paid his portion of the taxes shall be excepted from the advertisement and sale.

(b) **Payment of Entire Amount of Taxes by One Cotenant.** – Any one of several tenants in common or joint tenants (other than copartners) of real property may pay the entire amount of the taxes, interest, and costs constituting a lien on the property, and any amount so paid that is in excess of his share of the taxes, interest, and costs and that was not paid through agreement with or on behalf of the other joint owners shall constitute a lien in his favor upon the shares of the other joint owners. Such a lien may be enforced in a proceeding for actual partition, a proceeding for partition and sale, or by any other appropriate judicial proceeding. (1901, c. 558, ss. 13, 14, 47; Rev., s. 2860; C.S., s. 7983; 1971, c. 806, s. 1.)

§ 105-364. Collection of taxes outside the taxing unit.

(a) **Duty of Governing Body.** – It shall be the duty of the governing body of each taxing unit to require reports from the tax collector at such times as it may prescribe (but not less frequently than in connection with the tax collector's annual settlement) concerning the efforts he has made to locate taxpayers who have removed from the taxing unit, the efforts he has made to locate personal property in other taxing units belonging to delinquent taxpayers, and the efforts he has made under the provisions of this section to collect taxes.

(b) **Duty to Certify Unpaid Taxes.** – If a taxpayer has no personal property or real property subject to the tax lien in the taxing unit but does have personal property in some other taxing unit in this State, or if a taxpayer has removed from the taxing unit, leaving no personal property or real property subject to the tax lien there, and is known to be in some other taxing unit in this State, the tax collector shall forward the tax receipt (with a certificate stating that the taxes are unpaid) for collection to the tax collector of the taxing unit in which the taxpayer is known to have personal property or in which he is known to be. The tax collector may not, however, certify an unpaid tax receipt to another taxing unit if 10 years have elapsed since the date the unpaid taxes became due.

(c) **Effect of Certificate; Duty of Receiving Tax Collector.** – In the hands of the tax collector receiving them, the copy of the tax receipt and the certificate of nonpayment shall have the force and effect of an unpaid tax receipt of his own taxing unit, and it shall be the receiving tax collector's duty to proceed immediately to collect the taxes by any means by which he could lawfully collect taxes of his own taxing unit. Within 30 days after receiving such a tax receipt and certificate, the collector receiving them shall report to the tax collector that sent them that he has collected the tax, that he has begun proceedings to collect the tax, or that he is unable to collect it. If the tax collector reports that he has begun proceedings to collect the tax, he shall, not later than 90

days after so reporting, make a final report to the tax collector who certified the tax receipt stating that he has collected the tax or that he is unable to collect it.

- (1) In acting on a tax receipt and certificate under the provisions of this section, the tax collector receiving them shall, in addition to collecting the amount of taxes certified as due, also impose a fee equal to ten percent (10%) of the amount of taxes certified as unpaid, to be paid into the general fund of his taxing unit.
- (2) Within five days after making a collection under the provisions of this section, the tax collector receiving the tax receipt and certificate shall remit the funds collected, less the fee provided for in subdivision (c)(1), above, to the tax collector of the taxing unit that levied the tax.
- (3) If the tax collector receiving the tax receipt and certificate reports that he is unable to collect the tax, he shall make his report under oath and shall state therein that he has used due diligence and is unable to collect the tax by levy, attachment and garnishment, or any other legal means.

(d) **Liability on Bond.** – A tax collector who receives a tax receipt and certificate from the tax collector of another taxing unit under the provisions of subsection (b), above, shall be liable on his bond to the taxing unit that levied the tax for the amount of the taxes certified if:

- (1) The tax collector receiving the certified tax receipt fails to make any report to the certifying tax collector within 30 days after receiving the certified tax receipt.
- (2) The tax collector receiving the certified tax receipt fails to swear to any report stating that he is unable to collect the certified tax.
- (3) Having reported that he has begun proceedings to collect a certified tax, the tax collector receiving the certified tax receipt fails to make a final report within 90 days after reporting that he has begun proceedings for collection. (1939, c. 310, s. 1714; 1955, c. 909; 1963, c. 132; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 231.)

§ 105-365. Preference accorded taxes in liquidation of debtors' estates.

In all cases in which a taxpayer's assets are in the hands of a receiver or assignee for the benefit of creditors or are otherwise being liquidated or managed for the benefit of creditors, the taxes owed by the debtor (together with interest, penalties, and costs) shall be a preferred claim, second only to administration expenses and specific liens. The provisions of this section shall not be construed to modify or reduce the priority given by G.S. 105-356 to tax liens on real and personal property or to alter or preclude the exercise of any remedies against personal property provided for in G.S. 105-366. (1939, c. 310, s. 1704; 1971, c. 806, s. 1.)

§ 105-365.1. When and against whom collection remedies may be used.

(a) **Date of Delinquency.** – A tax collector may collect a tax using the remedies provided in G.S. 105-366 through G.S. 105-375 on or after the date the tax is delinquent. A tax is delinquent on the following date:

- (1) For a tax that is not a deferred tax, the date the tax accrues interest.
- (2) For a deferred tax, other than a tax described in subdivision (3) of this subsection, the date a disqualifying event occurs.
- (3) For a deferred tax under G.S. 105-277.1B that lost its eligibility for deferral due to the death of the owner, the first day of the ninth month following the date of death.

(b) Enforced Collection. – For purposes of using the collection remedies provided in G.S. 105-366 through G.S. 105-375 to collect delinquent taxes, the taxing unit shall proceed against property of the following taxpayer:

- (1) To collect delinquent taxes assessed on real property, the owner of record of property on which tax is due as of the date of delinquency and any subsequent owner of record of the property.
- (2) To collect delinquent taxes assessed on personal property, the owner of record as of January 1 of the calendar year in which the fiscal year of taxation begins.
- (3) To collect delinquent taxes assessed on a registered motor vehicle, the owner of record as of the date on which the current vehicle registration is renewed or the date on which a new registration is applied for. (2008-35, s. 2.8.)

§ 105-366. Remedies against personal property.

(a) Authority to Proceed against Personal Property; Relation between Remedies against Personal Property and Remedies against Real Property. – All tax collectors shall have authority to proceed against personal property to enforce the collection of taxes as provided in this section and in G.S. 105-367 and 105-368. Any tax collector may, in his discretion, proceed first against personal property before employing the remedies for enforcing the lien for taxes against real property, and he shall proceed first against personal property:

- (1) When directed to do so by the governing body of the taxing unit; or
- (2) When requested to do so by the taxpayer or by a mortgagee or other person holding a lien upon the real property subject to the lien for taxes if the person making the request furnishes the tax collector with a written statement describing the personal property to be proceeded against and giving its location.

No foreclosure of a tax lien on real property may be attacked as invalid on the ground that payment of the tax should have been procured from personal property.

(b) Remedies after Taxes Are Delinquent. – At any time after taxes are delinquent and before the filing of a tax foreclosure complaint under G.S. 105-374 or the docketing of a judgment for taxes under G.S. 105-375, and subject to the provisions of G.S. 105-356 governing the priority of liens, the tax collector may levy upon and sell or attach the following property for failure to pay taxes:

- (1) Any personal property owned by the taxpayer, regardless of the time at which it was acquired and regardless of the existence or date of creation of mortgages or other liens thereon.
- (2) Any personal property transferred by the taxpayer to a relative (which shall mean any parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew, or their spouses, of the taxpayer or his spouse).
- (3) Personal property in the hands of a receiver for the taxpayer. (It shall not be necessary for the tax collector to apply for an order of the court directing payment or authorizing the levy or attachment, but he may proceed as though the property were not in the hands of the receiver, and the tax collector's filing of a claim in a receivership proceeding shall not preclude him from proceeding to levy under G.S. 105-367 or to attach under G.S. 105-368.)
- (4) Personal property of a deceased taxpayer if the levy or attachment is made before final settlement of the estate.

- (5) The stock of goods or fixtures of a wholesale merchant or retailer, as defined in G.S. 105-164.3, in the hands of a purchaser or transferee thereof, or any other personal property of the purchaser or transferee of the property, if the taxes on the goods or fixtures remain unpaid 30 days after the date of the sale or transfer. In the case of other personal property of the purchaser or transferee, the levy or attachment must be made within six months of the sale or transfer.
- (6) Personal property of the taxpayer that has been repossessed by one having a security interest therein so long as the property remains in the hands of the person who has repossessed it or the person to whom it has been transferred other than by bona fide sale for value.
- (7) Personal property due the taxpayer or to become due to him within the calendar year.
- (8) Personal property of a partner in satisfaction of taxes on partnership property, but only after the tax collector:
 - a. Has sold the taxing unit's lien for taxes against the partnership real property, if any; and
 - b. Exhausted the partnership's personal property through the use of levy and attachment and garnishment; and
 - c. Exercised the authority granted him by G.S. 105-364 in an effort to collect the tax due on the partnership's property.
- (9) Personal property transferred by the taxpayer by any type of transfer other than those mentioned in this subsection (b) and other than by bona fide sale for value if the levy or attachment is made within six months of the transfer.

(c) Remedies Before Taxes Are Delinquent. – If between the date as of which property is to be listed and January 6 of the fiscal year for which the taxes are imposed the tax collector has reasonable grounds for believing that the taxpayer is about to remove his property from the taxing unit or transfer it to another person or is in imminent danger of becoming insolvent, the tax collector may levy on or attach that property or any other personal property of the taxpayer, in the manner provided in G.S. 105-367 and 105-368. If the amount of taxes collected under this subsection has not yet been determined, these taxes shall be computed in accordance with G.S. 105-359 and any applicable discount shall be allowed.

(d) Remedies against Sellers and Purchasers of Stocks of Goods or Fixtures of Wholesale Merchants or Retailers. –

- (1) Any wholesale merchant or retailer, as defined in G.S. 105-164.3, who sells or transfers the major part of its stock of goods, materials, supplies, or fixtures, other than in the ordinary course of business, or who goes out of business, must take the following actions:
 - a. At least 48 hours prior to the date of the pending sale, transfer, or termination of business, give notice to the assessors and tax collectors of the taxing units in which the business is located.
 - b. Within 30 days of the sale, transfer, or termination of business, pay all taxes due or to become due on the transferred property on the first day of September of the current calendar year.
- (2) Any person to whom the major part of the stock of goods, materials, supplies, or fixtures of a wholesale merchant or retailer is sold or transferred, other than in the ordinary course of business, or who becomes the successor in business of a

wholesale merchant or retailer shall withhold from the purchase money paid to the merchant an amount sufficient to pay the taxes due or to become due on the transferred property on the first day of September of the current calendar year until the former owner or seller produces either a receipt from the tax collector showing that the taxes have been paid or a certificate that no taxes are due. If the purchaser or successor in business fails to withhold a sufficient amount of the purchase money to pay the taxes as required by this subsection and the taxes remain unpaid after the 30-day period allowed, the purchaser or successor is personally liable for the amount of the taxes unpaid. This liability may be enforced by means of a civil action brought in the name of the taxing unit against the purchaser or successor in an appropriate trial division of the General Court of Justice in the county in which the taxing unit is located.

- (3) Whenever any wholesale merchant or retailer sells or transfers the major part of its stock of goods, materials, supplies, or fixtures, other than in the ordinary course of business, or goes out of business and the taxes due or to become due on the transferred property on the first day of September of the current calendar year are unpaid, the tax collector, to enforce collection of the unpaid taxes, may do any of the following:
 - a. Levy on or attach any personal property of the seller.
 - b. If the taxes remain unpaid 30 days after the date of the transfer or termination of business, levy on or attach any of the property transferred in the hands of the transferee or successor in business, or any other personal property of the transferee or successor in business, but in either case the levy or attachment must be made within six months of the transfer or termination of business.
- (4) In using the remedies provided in this subsection, the amount of taxes not yet determined shall be computed in accordance with G.S. 105-359, and any applicable discount shall be allowed. (1939, c. 310, s. 1713; 1951, c. 1141, s. 1; 1955, cc. 1263, 1264; 1957, c. 1414, ss. 2-4; 1969, c. 305, c. 1029, s. 1; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 564, s. 1; 1987, c. 45, s. 1; c. 93, s. 3; 1998-98, ss. 112, 113.)

§ 105-367. Procedure for levy.

(a) The levy upon the sale of tangible personal property for tax collection purposes (including levy and sale fees) shall be governed by the laws regulating levy and sale under execution except as otherwise provided in this section.

(b) The tax collector or any duly appointed deputy tax collector shall make the levy and conduct the sale; it shall not be necessary for the sheriff to make the levy or conduct the sale. However, upon the authorization of the governing body of the taxing unit, the tax collector may direct an execution against personal property for taxes to the sheriff in the case of county or municipal taxes or to a municipal policeman in the case of municipal taxes. In either case the officer to whom the execution is directed shall proceed to levy on and sell the personal property subject to levy in the manner and with the powers and authority normally exercised by sheriffs in levying upon and selling personal property under execution.

(c) In addition to the notice of sale required by the laws governing sale of property levied upon under execution, the tax collector may advertise the sale in any reasonable manner and for

any reasonable period of time he deems necessary to produce an adequate bid for the property. The taxing unit shall advance the cost of all advertising.

(d) Levy and sale fees, plus actual advertising costs, shall be added to and collected in the same manner as taxes. The advertising costs, when collected, shall be used to reimburse the taxing unit for advertising costs it has advanced. Levy and sale fees, when collected, shall be treated in the same manner as other fees received by the collecting official. (1939, c. 310, s. 1713; 1951, c. 1141, s. 1; 1955, cc. 1263, 1264; 1957, c. 1414, ss. 2-4; 1969, c. 305; c. 1029, s. 1; 1971, c. 806, s. 1.)

§ 105-368. Procedure for attachment and garnishment.

(a) Subject to the provisions of G.S. 105-356 governing the priority of the lien acquired, the tax collector may attach wages and other compensation, rents, bank deposits, the proceeds of property subject to levy, or any other intangible personal property, including property held in the Escheat Fund, in the circumstances and to the extent prescribed in G.S. 105-366(b), (c), and (d).

In the case of property due the taxpayer or to become due to him within the current calendar year, the person owing the property to the taxpayer or having the property in his possession shall be liable for the taxes to the extent of the amount he owes or has in his possession. However, when wages or other compensation for personal services is attached, the garnishee shall not pay to the tax collector more than ten percent (10%) of such compensation for any one pay period.

(b) To proceed under this section, the tax collector shall serve or cause to be served upon the taxpayer and the person owing or having in his possession the wages, rents, debts or other property sought to be attached a notice as provided by this subsection. The notice may be personally served by any deputy or employee of the tax collector or by any officer having authority to serve summonses, or may be served in any manner provided in Rule 4 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure. The notice shall contain:

- (1) The name of the taxpayer, and if known his Social Security number or federal tax identification number and his address.
- (2) The amount of the taxes, penalties, interest, and costs (including the fees allowed by this section) and the year or years for which the taxes were imposed.
- (3) The name of the taxing unit or units by which the taxes were levied.
- (4) A brief description of the property sought to be attached.
- (5) A copy of the applicable law, that is, G.S. 105-366 and 105-368. Notices concerning two or more taxpayers may be combined if they are to be served upon the same garnishee, but the taxes, penalties, interest, and costs charged against each taxpayer must be set forth separately.

(c) If the garnishee has no defense to offer or no setoff against the taxpayer, he shall within 10 days after service of the notice answer it by sending to the tax collector by registered or certified mail a statement to that effect, and if the amount demanded by the tax collector is then due to the taxpayer or subject to his demand, the garnishee shall remit it to the tax collector with his statement; but if the amount due to the taxpayer or subject to his demand is to mature in the future, the garnishee's statement shall set forth that fact, and the demand shall be paid to the tax collector upon maturity. Any payment by the garnishee under the provisions of this subsection (c) shall completely satisfy any liability therefor on his part to the taxpayer.

(d) If the garnishee has a defense or setoff against the taxpayer, he shall state it in writing under oath, and, within 10 days after service of the garnishment notice, he shall send two copies of his statement to the tax collector by registered or certified mail. If the tax collector admits the

defense or setoff, he shall so advise the garnishee in writing within 10 days after receipt of the garnishee's statement, and the attachment or garnishment shall thereupon be discharged to the amount required by the defense or setoff, and any amount attached or garnished which is not affected by the defense or setoff shall be remitted to the tax collector as provided in subsection (c), above.

If the tax collector does not admit the defense or setoff, he shall set forth in writing his objections thereto and send a copy thereof to the garnishee within 10 days after receipt of the garnishee's statement, or within such further time as may be agreed on by the garnishee, and at the same time the tax collector shall file a copy of the notice of garnishment, a copy of the garnishee's statement, and a copy of the tax collector's objections thereto in the appropriate division of the General Court of Justice of the county in which the garnishee resides or does business, where the issues made shall be tried as in civil actions.

(e) If the garnishee has not responded to the notice of garnishment as required by subsections (c) and (d), above, within 15 days after service of the notice, the tax collector may file in the appropriate division of the General Court of Justice of the county in which the garnishee resides a copy of the notice of garnishment, accompanied by a written statement that the garnishee has not responded thereto and a request for judgment, and the issues shall be tried as in civil actions.

(f) The taxpayer may raise any defenses to the attachment or garnishment that he may have in the manner provided in subsection (d), above, for the garnishee.

(g) The fee for serving a notice of garnishment shall be the same as that charged in a civil action. If judgment is entered in favor of the taxing unit by default or after hearing, the garnishee shall become liable for the taxes, penalties, and interest due by the taxpayer, plus the fees and costs of the action, but payment shall not be required from amounts which are not to become due to the taxpayer until they actually come due. The garnishee may satisfy the judgment upon paying the amount thereof, and if he fails to do so, execution may issue as provided by law. From any judgment or order entered, either the taxing unit or the garnishee may appeal as provided by law. If, before or after judgment, adequate security is filed for the payment of the taxes, penalties, interest, and costs, the tax collector may release the attachment or garnishment, or execution may be stayed at the request of the tax collector pending appeal, but the final judgment shall be paid or enforced as above provided. If judgment is rendered against the taxing unit, it shall pay the fees and costs of the action. All fees collected by officers shall be disposed of in the same manner as other fees collected by such officers.

(h) Tax collectors may proceed against the wages, salary, or other compensation of officials and employees of this State and its agencies, instrumentalities, and political subdivisions in the manner provided in this section. If the taxpayer is an employee of the State, the notice of attachment shall be served upon him and upon the head or chief fiscal officer of the department, agency, instrumentality, or institution by which he is employed. If the taxpayer is an employee of a political subdivision of the State (county, municipality, etc.), the notice of attachment shall be served upon him and upon the officer charged with making up the payrolls of the political subdivision by which he is employed. All deductions from the wages or salary of a taxpayer made pursuant to this subsection (h) and remitted to the tax collector shall, pro tanto, constitute a satisfaction of the salary or wages due the taxpayer.

(i) (1) Any person who, after written demand therefor, refuses to give the tax collector or assessor a list of the names and addresses of all of his employees who may be liable for taxes, shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

- (2) Any tax collector or assessor who receives, upon his written demand, any list of employees may not release or furnish that list or any copy thereof, or disclose any name or information thereon, to any other person, and may not use that list in any manner or for any purpose not directly related to and in furtherance of the collection and foreclosure of taxes. Any tax collector or assessor who violates or allows the violation of this subdivision (i)(2) shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. (1939, c. 310, s. 1713; 1951, c. 1141, s. 1; 1955, cc. 1263, 1264; 1957, c. 1414, ss. 2-4; 1969, c. 305, c. 1029, s. 1; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1979, c. 103, ss. 3, 4; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1085, s. 2; 1981, c. 76, s. 1; 1987, c. 45, s. 1; 1989, c. 580, s. 2; 1993, c. 539, s. 724; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

§ 105-369. Advertisement of tax liens on real property for failure to pay taxes.

(a) Report of Unpaid Taxes That Are Liens on Real Property. – In February of each year, the tax collector must report to the governing body the total amount of unpaid taxes for the current fiscal year that are liens on real property. A county tax collector's report is due the first Monday in February, and a municipal tax collector's report is due the second Monday in February. Upon receipt of the report, the governing body must order the tax collector to advertise the tax liens. For purposes of this section, district taxes collected by county tax collectors shall be regarded as county taxes and district taxes collected by municipal tax collectors shall be regarded as municipal taxes.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 1983 (Regular Session, 1984), c. 1013.

(b1) Notice to Owner. – After the governing body orders the tax collector to advertise the tax liens, the tax collector must send a notice to the record owner of each affected parcel of property, as determined as of the date the taxes became delinquent. The notice must be sent to the owner's last known address by first-class mail at least 30 days before the date the advertisement is to be published. The notice must state the principal amount of unpaid taxes that are a lien on the parcel to be advertised and inform the owner that the name of the record owner as of the date the taxes became delinquent will appear in a newspaper advertisement of delinquent taxes if the taxes are not paid before the publication date. Failure to mail the notice required by this section to the correct record owner does not affect the validity of the tax lien or of any foreclosure action.

(c) **(Effective for taxable years beginning before January 1, 2025)** Time and Contents of Advertisement. – A tax collector's failure to comply with this subsection does not affect the validity of the taxes or tax liens. The county tax collector shall advertise county tax liens by posting a notice of the liens at the county courthouse and by publishing each lien at least one time in one or more newspapers having general circulation in the taxing unit. The municipal tax collector shall advertise municipal tax liens by posting a notice of the liens at the city or town hall and by publishing each lien at least one time in one or more newspapers having general circulation in the taxing unit. Advertisements of tax liens shall be made during the period March 1 through June 30. The costs of newspaper advertising shall be paid by the taxing unit. If the taxes of two or more taxing units are collected by the same tax collector, the tax liens of each unit shall be advertised separately unless, under the provisions of a special act or contractual agreement between the taxing units, joint advertisement is permitted.

The posted notice and newspaper advertisement shall set forth the following information:

- (1) Repealed by Session Laws 2006-106, s. 2, effective for taxes imposed for taxable years beginning on or after July 1, 2006.

- (1a) The name of the record owner as of the date the taxes became delinquent for each parcel on which the taxing unit has a lien for unpaid taxes, in alphabetical order.
- (1b) After the information required by subdivision (1a) of this subsection for each parcel, a brief description of each parcel of land to which a lien has attached and a statement of the principal amount of the taxes constituting a lien against the parcel.
- (2) A statement that the amounts advertised will be increased by interest and costs and that the omission of interest and costs from the amounts advertised will not constitute waiver of the taxing unit's claim for those items.
- (3) In the event the list of tax liens has been divided for purposes of advertisement in more than one newspaper, a statement of the names of all newspapers in which advertisements will appear and the dates on which they will be published.
- (4) A statement that the taxing unit may foreclose the tax liens and sell the real property subject to the liens in satisfaction of its claim for taxes.

(c) **(Effective for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2025)** Time and Contents of Advertisement. – A tax collector's failure to comply with this subsection does not affect the validity of the taxes or tax liens. The county tax collector shall advertise county tax liens by posting a notice of the liens at the county courthouse and by publishing each lien at least one time in one or more newspapers having general circulation in the taxing unit. The municipal tax collector shall advertise municipal tax liens by posting a notice of the liens at the city or town hall and by publishing each lien at least one time in one or more newspapers having general circulation in the taxing unit. A tax collector shall, in addition to the advertisements required by this section, also advertise a tax lien by posting a notice of the lien in a conspicuous manner at the parcel to be advertised. Advertisements of tax liens shall be made during the period March 1 through June 30. The costs of newspaper advertising shall be paid by the taxing unit. If the taxes of two or more taxing units are collected by the same tax collector, the tax liens of each unit shall be advertised separately unless, under the provisions of a special act or contractual agreement between the taxing units, joint advertisement is permitted.

All posted notices and newspaper advertisements shall set forth the following information:

- (1) Repealed by Session Laws 2006-106, s. 2, effective for taxes imposed for taxable years beginning on or after July 1, 2006.
- (1a) The name of the record owner as of the date the taxes became delinquent for each parcel on which the taxing unit has a lien for unpaid taxes, in alphabetical order.
- (1b) After the information required by subdivision (1a) of this subsection for each parcel, a brief description of each parcel of land to which a lien has attached and a statement of the principal amount of the taxes constituting a lien against the parcel.
- (2) A statement that the amounts advertised will be increased by interest and costs and that the omission of interest and costs from the amounts advertised will not constitute waiver of the taxing unit's claim for those items.
- (3) In the event the list of tax liens has been divided for purposes of advertisement in more than one newspaper, a statement of the names of all newspapers in which advertisements will appear and the dates on which they will be published.

(4) A statement that the taxing unit may foreclose the tax liens and sell the real property subject to the liens in satisfaction of its claim for taxes.

(d) Costs. – Each parcel of real property advertised pursuant to this section shall be assessed an advertising fee to cover the actual cost of the advertisement. Actual advertising costs per parcel shall be determined by the tax collector on any reasonable basis. Advertising costs assessed pursuant to this subsection are taxes.

(e) Payments during Advertising Period. – At any time during the advertisement period, any parcel may be withdrawn from the list by payment of the taxes plus interest that has accrued to the time of payment and a proportionate part of the advertising fee to be determined by the tax collector. Thereafter, the tax collector shall delete that parcel from any subsequent advertisement, but the tax collector is not liable for failure to make the deletion.

(f) Listing and Advertising in Wrong Name. – No tax lien is void because the real property to which the lien attached was listed or advertised in the name of a person other than the person in whose name the property should have been listed for taxation if the property was in other respects correctly described on the abstract or in the advertisement.

(g) Wrongful Advertisement. – Any tax collector or deputy tax collector who willfully advertises any tax lien knowing that the property is not subject to taxation or that the taxes advertised have been paid is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor, and shall be required to pay the injured party all damages sustained in consequence. (1939, c. 310, s. 1715; 1955, c. 993; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1983, c. 808, s. 1; 1983 (Reg. Sess., 1984), c. 1013; 1993, c. 539, s. 725; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1999-439, s. 1; 2000-140, s. 73; 2006-106, s. 2; 2024-45, s. 22(a).)

§§ 105-370 through 105-372: Repealed by Session Laws 1983, c. 808, ss. 2-4.

§ 105-373. Settlements.

(a) Annual Settlement of Tax Collector. –

(1) Preliminary Report. – After July 1 and before a tax collector is charged with taxes for the current fiscal year, the tax collector shall make a sworn report to the governing body of the taxing unit showing all of the following:

a. A list of the persons owning real property whose taxes for the preceding fiscal year remain unpaid and the principal amount owed by each person.

b. A list of the persons not owning real property whose personal property taxes for the preceding fiscal year remain unpaid and the principal amount owed by each person. To this list the tax collector shall append a statement under oath that the tax collector has made diligent efforts to collect the taxes due from the persons listed out of their personal property and by other means available for collection, and the tax collector shall report any other information concerning these taxpayers that may be of interest to or required by the governing body, including a report of the tax collector's efforts to make collection outside the taxing unit under G.S. 105-364. The governing body of the taxing unit may publish this list in any newspaper in the taxing unit. The cost of publishing this list shall be paid by the taxing unit.

(2) Insolvents. – Upon receiving the report required by subdivision (a)(1) of this section, the governing body of the taxing unit shall enter upon its minutes the

names of persons owing taxes, but that listed no real property, that it finds to be insolvent, and it shall by resolution designate the list entered in its minutes as the insolvent list to be credited to the tax collector in the tax collector's settlement.

(3) Settlement for Current Taxes. – After July 1 and before a tax collector is charged with taxes for the current fiscal year, the tax collector shall make full settlement with the governing body of the taxing unit for all taxes in the tax collector's hands for collection for the preceding fiscal year. The following charges and credits apply:

a. In the settlement the tax collector shall be charged with all of the following:

1. The total amount of all taxes in the tax collector's hands for collection for the year, including amounts originally charged to the tax collector and all amounts subsequently charged on account of discoveries.
2. All penalties, interest, and costs collected by the tax collector in connection with taxes for the current year.
3. All other sums collected by the tax collector.

b. The tax collector shall be credited with all of the following:

1. All sums representing taxes for the year deposited by the tax collector to the credit of the taxing unit or receipted for by a proper official of the unit.
2. Releases duly allowed by the governing body.
3. The principal amount of taxes constituting liens on real property.
4. The principal amount of taxes included in the insolvent list determined in accordance with subdivision (a)(2) of this section.
5. Discounts allowed by law.
6. Commissions, if any, lawfully payable to the tax collector as compensation.
7. The principal amount of taxes for any assessment appealed to the Property Tax Commission when the appeal has not been finally adjudicated.

The tax collector shall be liable on the tax collector's bond for both honesty and faithful performance of duty; for any deficiencies; and, in addition, for all criminal penalties provided by law.

The settlement, together with the action of the governing body with respect to it, shall be entered in full upon the minutes of the governing body.

(4) Disposition of Tax Receipts after Settlement. – Uncollected taxes allowed as credits in the settlement prescribed in subdivision (a)(3) of this section, whether represented by tax liens held by the taxing unit or included in the list of insolvents, shall, for purposes of collection, be recharged to the tax collector or charged to some other person designated by the governing body of the taxing unit under statutory authority. The person charged with uncollected taxes shall take the following actions:

a. Give bond satisfactory to the governing body.

- b. Receive the tax receipts and tax records representing the uncollected taxes.
- c. Have and exercise all powers and duties conferred or imposed by law upon tax collectors.
- d. Receive compensation as determined by the governing body.

(b) Settlements for Delinquent Taxes. – Annually, at the time prescribed for the settlement provided in subdivision (a)(3) of this section, all persons having in their hands for collection any taxes for years prior to the year involved in the settlement shall settle with the governing body of the taxing unit for collections made on each prior year's taxes. The settlement for the taxes for prior years shall be made in whatever form is satisfactory to the chief accounting officer and the governing body of the taxing unit, and it shall be entered in full upon the minutes of the governing body.

(c) Settlement at End of Term. – At the end of a tax collector's last term of office, the tax collector shall, on the last business day of the term, make full and complete settlement for all taxes, current or delinquent, in the tax collector's hands and deliver the tax records, tax receipts, and accounts to the successor in office. The settlement shall be made in whatever form is satisfactory to the chief accounting officer and the governing body of the taxing unit, and it shall be entered in full upon the minutes of the governing body.

(d) Settlement upon Vacancy during Term. – When a tax collector voluntarily resigns, the tax collector shall, upon the last day in office, make full settlement in the manner provided in subsection (c) of this section for all taxes in the tax collector's hands for collection. In default of a settlement, or in case of a vacancy occurring during a term for any reason, it shall be the duty of the chief accounting officer or, in the discretion of the governing body, of some other qualified person appointed by it immediately to prepare and submit to the governing body a report in the nature of a settlement made on behalf of the former tax collector. The report, together with the governing body's action with respect to it, shall be entered in full upon the minutes of the governing body. Whenever a settlement is made on behalf of a former tax collector, the governing body may deliver the tax receipts and tax records to a successor collector immediately upon the occurrence of the vacancy, or it may make whatever temporary arrangements for the collection of taxes as may be expedient, but in no event shall any person be permitted to collect taxes until the person has given bond satisfactory to the governing body.

(e) Effect of Approval of Settlement. – Approval of any settlement by the governing body does not relieve the tax collector or the tax collector's bondsmen of liability for any shortage actually existing at the time of the settlement and thereafter discovered; nor does it relieve the collector of any criminal liability.

(f) Penalties. – In addition to any other civil or criminal penalties provided by law, any member of a governing body of a taxing unit, tax collector, or chief accounting officer who fails to perform any duty imposed by this section is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(g) Relief from Collecting Insolvents. – The governing body of any taxing unit may, in its discretion, relieve the tax collector of the charge of taxes owed by persons on the insolvent list that are five or more years past due when it appears to the governing body that the taxes are uncollectible.

(h) Relief from Collecting Taxes on Classified Motor Vehicles. – The board of county commissioners may, in its discretion, relieve the tax collector of the charge of taxes on classified motor vehicles listed pursuant to G.S. 105-330.3(a) that are one year or more past due when it appears to the board that the taxes are uncollectible. This relief, when granted, shall include

municipal and special district taxes charged to the collector. (1939, c. 310, s. 1719; 1945, c. 635; 1947, c. 484, ss. 3, 4; 1951, c. 300, s. 1; c. 1036, s. 1; 1953, c. 176, s. 2; 1955, c. 908; 1967, c. 705, s. 1; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1983, c. 670, s. 22; c. 808, ss. 5-7; 1987, c. 16; 1991, c. 624, s. 3; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 961, s. 10; 1993, c. 539, s. 726; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1997-456, s. 27; 2006-30, s. 7; 2021-91, s. 3(c).)

§ 105-374. Foreclosure of tax lien by action in nature of action to foreclose a mortgage.

(a) General Nature of Action. – The foreclosure action authorized by this section is in the nature of an action to foreclose a mortgage and shall be instituted in the appropriate division of the General Court of Justice in the county in which the real property is situated.

(b) Tax Lien. – Taxing units may proceed under this section on the tax lien created by G.S. 105-355(a).

(c) Parties; Summons. – Each of the following persons shall be made parties and shall be served with a summons in the manner provided by G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4:

- (1) The owner of record and the owner's spouse, if any.
- (2) All other taxing units having tax liens.
- (3) All other lienholders of record.
- (4) All persons that would be entitled to be made parties to a court action to foreclose a mortgage on the property in which no deficiency judgment is sought.

A trustee in a deed of trust shall not be made a party and shall not be served.

The fact that the owner of record or any other defendant is a minor, is incompetent, or is under any other disability shall not prevent or delay the foreclosure of the tax lien; and each of these persons shall be made parties and shall be served with a summons in the same manner as in other civil actions.

Persons that cannot be located, persons whose names and whereabouts are unknown, and all possible heirs or assignees of these persons may be served by publication; and these persons, their heirs, and assignees may be designated by general description or by fictitious names in the action.

(c1) Lienholders Separately Designated. – The word "lienholder" shall appear immediately after the name of each lienholder whose name appears in the caption of any action instituted under this section. This designation is intended to make clear to the public the capacity of these persons that necessitated their having been made parties to the action. Failure to add this designation to captions does not constitute grounds for attacking the validity of an action brought under this section or the title to real property derived from the action.

(d) Complaint as Lis Pendens. – The complaint in an action brought under this section shall, from the time it is filed in the office of the clerk of superior court, serve as notice of the pendency of the foreclosure action, and every person whose interest in the real property is subsequently acquired or whose interest in the property is subsequently registered or recorded shall be bound by all proceedings taken in the foreclosure action after the filing of the complaint in the same manner as if those persons had been made parties to the action. It is not necessary to have the complaint cross-indexed as a notice of action pending to have the effect prescribed by this subsection.

(e) Subsequent Taxes. – The complaint in a tax foreclosure action brought under this section by a taxing unit shall, in addition to alleging the tax lien on which the action is based, include a general allegation of subsequent taxes that are or may become a lien on the same real property in favor of the plaintiff unit. Thereafter it shall not be necessary to amend the complaint to

incorporate the subsequent taxes by specific allegation. In case of redemption before confirmation of the foreclosure sale, the person redeeming shall be required to pay, before the foreclosure action is discontinued, at least all taxes on the real property that have at the time of discontinuance become due to the plaintiff unit, plus penalties, interest, and costs. Immediately prior to judgment ordering sale in a foreclosure action, if there has been no redemption prior to that time, the tax collector or the attorney for the plaintiff unit shall file in the action a certificate setting forth all taxes that are a lien on the real property in favor of the plaintiff unit, other than taxes the amount of which has not been definitely determined.

(e1) Taxes Paid by Plaintiff. – Any plaintiff in a tax foreclosure action, other than a taxing unit, may include in the complaint, originally or by amendment, all other taxes and special assessments paid by the plaintiff that were liens on the same real property.

(f) Joinder of Parcels. – All real property within the taxing unit subject to liens for taxes levied against the same taxpayer for the first year involved in the foreclosure action may be joined in one action. However, if real property is transferred by the listing taxpayer subsequent to the first year involved in the foreclosure action, all subsequent taxes, penalties, interest, and costs for which the property is ordered sold under this Subchapter shall be prorated to the property in the same manner as if payments were being made to release the property from the tax lien under G.S. 105-356(b).

(g) Special Benefit Assessments. – A cause of action for the foreclosure of the lien of any special benefit assessments may be included in any complaint filed under this section.

(h) Joint Foreclosure by Two or More Taxing Units. – Liens of different taxing units on the same parcel of real property, representing taxes in the hands of the same tax collector, shall be foreclosed in one action. Liens of different taxing units on the same parcel of real property, representing taxes in the hands of different tax collectors, may be foreclosed in one action in the discretion of the governing bodies of the taxing units.

The lien of any taxing unit made a party defendant in any foreclosure action shall be alleged in an answer filed by the taxing unit, and the tax collector of each answering unit shall, prior to judgment ordering sale, file a certificate of subsequent taxes similar to that filed by the tax collector of the plaintiff unit, and the taxes of each answering unit shall be of equal dignity with the taxes of the plaintiff unit. Any answering unit may, in case of payment of the plaintiff unit's taxes, continue the foreclosure action until all taxes due to it have been paid, and it is not necessary for any answering unit to file a separate foreclosure action or to proceed under G.S. 105-375 with respect to the taxes.

If a taxing unit properly served as a party defendant in a foreclosure action fails to answer and file the certificate of subsequent taxes provided for in this subsection, all of its taxes shall be barred by the judgment of sale except to the extent that the purchase price at the foreclosure sale, after payment of costs and of the liens of all taxing units whose liens are properly alleged by complaint or answer and certificates, is sufficient to pay the taxes. However, if a defendant taxing unit is plaintiff in another foreclosure action pending against the same property, or if it has begun a proceeding under G.S. 105-375, its answer may allege that fact in lieu of alleging its liens, and the court, in its discretion, may order consolidation of the actions or such other disposition of the actions, including disposition of the costs, as it deems advisable. The order may be made by the clerk of the superior court, subject to appeal as provided in G.S. 1-301.1.

(i) Costs. – Except as modified by this subsection, costs may be taxed in any foreclosure action brought under this section in the same manner as in other civil actions. When costs are collected, either by payment prior to the sale or upon payment of the purchase price at the

foreclosure sale, the fees allowed officers shall be paid to those entitled to receive them. In foreclosure actions in which the plaintiff is a taxing unit, no prosecution bond shall be required.

The word "costs," as used in this subsection, includes a reasonable attorney's fee for the plaintiff in such amount as the court shall, in its discretion, determine and allow. When a taxing unit is made a party defendant in a tax foreclosure action and files an answer, the court may include in the costs an attorney's fee for the defendant unit in an amount that the court, in its discretion, determines and allows. The governing body of any taxing unit may, in its discretion, pay a smaller or greater sum than that allowed as costs to its attorney as a suit fee, and the governing body may allow a reasonable commission to its attorney on taxes collected by the attorney. Alternatively, the governing body may arrange with its attorney for the handling of tax foreclosure suits on a salary basis or may make any other reasonable agreement with its attorney. Any arrangement made between a taxing unit and its attorney may provide that attorneys' fees collected as costs in foreclosure actions shall be collected for the use of the taxing unit.

In any foreclosure action in which real property is actually sold after judgment, costs shall include a commissioner's fee to be fixed by the court, not exceeding five percent (5%) of the purchase price; and in case of redemption between the date of sale and the order of confirmation, the fee shall be added to the amount otherwise necessary for redemption. In case more than one sale is made of the same property in any action, the commissioner's fee may be based on the highest amount bid, but the commissioner shall not be allowed a separate fee for each such sale. The governing body of any plaintiff unit may request the court to appoint as commissioner a salaried official, attorney, or employee of the unit and, when the requested appointment is made, may require that the commissioner's fees, when collected, be paid to the plaintiff unit for its use.

(j) Contested Actions. – Any action brought under this section in which an answer raising an issue requiring trial is filed within the time allowed by law is entitled to a preference as to time of trial over all other civil actions.

(k) Judgment of Sale. – Any judgment in favor of the plaintiff or any defendant taxing unit in an action brought under this section shall order the sale of the real property or as much as may be necessary for the satisfaction of all of the following:

- (1) Taxes adjudged to be liens in favor of the plaintiff, other than taxes the amount of which has not been definitely determined, together with penalties, interest, and costs.
- (2) Taxes adjudged to be liens in favor of other taxing units, other than taxes the amount of which has not yet been definitely determined, if those taxes have been alleged in answers filed by the other taxing units, together with penalties, interest, and costs.

The judgment shall appoint a commissioner to conduct the sale and shall order that the property be sold in fee simple, free and clear of all interests, rights, claims, and liens whatever, except that the sale shall be subject to (i) taxes the amount of which cannot be definitely determined at the time of the judgment, (ii) taxes and special assessments of taxing units which are not parties to the action, (iii) C-PACE assessments authorized under Article 10B of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, (iv) in the discretion of the court, taxes alleged in other tax foreclosure actions or proceedings pending against the same real property, and (v) conservation agreements, as defined in G.S. 121-35(1).

In all cases in which no answer is filed within the time allowed by law, and in cases in which answers filed do not seek to prevent sale of the property, the clerk of the superior court may enter the judgment, subject to appeal as provided in G.S. 1-301.1.

(l) Advertisement of Sale. – The sale and all necessary resales shall be advertised in the manner provided by Article 29A of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes.

(m) Sale. – The sale shall be by public auction to the highest bidder and shall, in accordance with the judgment, be held at the courthouse door on any day of the week except a Sunday or legal holiday when the courthouse is closed for transactions. In actions brought by a municipality that is not a county seat, the court may, in its discretion, direct that the sale be held at the city or town hall door.

(m1) Deposit from Bidder. – The commissioner conducting the sale may, in the commissioner's discretion, require from any successful bidder a deposit equal to not more than twenty percent (20%) of the bid. In the event that the bidder refuses to take title and a resale becomes necessary, the deposit shall be applied to pay the costs of sale and any loss resulting. Nothing in this subsection deprives the commissioner of the commissioner's right to sue for specific performance of the contract. No deposit shall be required of a taxing unit that has made the highest bid at the foreclosure sale.

(n) Report of Sale. – Within three days following the foreclosure sale, the commissioner shall report the sale to the court giving full particulars of the sale.

(o) Exceptions and Increased Bids. – At any time within 10 days after the commissioner files the report of the foreclosure sale, any person having an interest in the real property may file exceptions to the report, and at any time within that 10-day period, an increased bid may be filed in the amount specified by and subject to the provisions of Article 29A of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes, except as otherwise provided by this section. In the absence of exceptions or increased bids, the court may, whenever it deems it necessary for the best interests of the parties, order resale of the property.

(p) Judgment of Confirmation. – At any time after the expiration of 10 days from the time the commissioner files the report, if no exception or increased bid has been filed, the commissioner may apply for judgment of confirmation, and in like manner the commissioner may apply for a judgment of confirmation after the court has passed upon exceptions filed, or after any necessary resales have been held and reported and 10 days have elapsed. The judgment of confirmation shall direct the commissioner to deliver the deed upon payment of the purchase price. This judgment may be entered by the clerk of superior court subject to appeal as provided in G.S. 1-301.1. This judgment shall bear interest at the same rate as a judgment entered under G.S. 105-375.

(q) Application of Proceeds; Commissioner's Final Report. – After delivery of the deed and collection of the purchase price, the commissioner shall apply the proceeds as follows:

- (1) First, to payment of all costs of the action, including the commissioner's fee and the attorney's fee. The costs shall be paid to the officials or funds entitled to them.
- (2) Then to the payment of taxes, penalties, and interest for which the real property was ordered to be sold, and in case the funds remaining are insufficient for this purpose, they shall be distributed pro rata to the various taxing units for whose taxes the property was ordered sold.
- (3) Then pro rata to the payment of any special benefit assessments for which the property was ordered sold, together with interest and costs.
- (4) Then pro rata to payment of taxes, penalties, interest, and costs of taxing units that were parties to the foreclosure action but that filed no answers in the action.

- (5) Then pro rata to payment of special benefit assessments of taxing units that were parties to the foreclosure action but that filed no answers in the action, together with interest and costs.
- (6) And any balance then remaining shall be paid in accordance with any directions given by the court and, in the absence of directions, shall be paid into court for the benefit of the persons entitled to it. If the clerk is in doubt as to which person is entitled to the surplus or if any adverse claims are asserted to the surplus, the clerk shall hold the surplus until rights to it are established in a special proceeding pursuant to G.S. 1-339.71.

Within five days after delivering the deed, the commissioner shall make a full report to the court showing delivery of the deed, receipt of the purchase price, and the disbursement of the proceeds, accompanied by receipts evidencing all the disbursements.

(r) Purchase and Resale by Taxing Unit. – The rights of a taxing unit to purchase real property at a foreclosure sale and resell it are governed by G.S. 105-376. (1939, c. 310, s. 1719; 1945, c. 635; 1947, c. 484, ss. 3, 4; 1951, c. 300, s. 1; c. 1036, s. 1; 1953, c. 176, s. 2; 1955, c. 908; 1967, c. 705, s. 1; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 788, s. 1; 1981, c. 580; 1983, c. 808, s. 8; 1999-216, ss. 14-16; 2003-337, s. 11; 2006-106, s. 3; 2021-91, s. 3(a); 2022-55, s. 4(a); 2024-44, s. 3.)

§ 105-375. In rem method of foreclosure.

(a) Intent of Section. – Proceedings brought under this section are strictly in rem. This section provides, as an alternative to G.S. 105-374, a simple and inexpensive method of enforcing payment of taxes necessarily levied, to the knowledge of all persons, for the requirements of local governments in this State and recognizes, in authorizing this proceeding, that all persons owning interests in real property know or should know that the tax lien on their real property may be foreclosed and the property sold for failure to pay taxes.

(b) Docketing Certificate of Taxes as Judgment. – In lieu of following the procedure set forth in G.S. 105-374, the governing body of any taxing unit may direct the tax collector to file with the clerk of superior court, no earlier than 30 days after the tax liens were advertised, a certificate showing the following: the name of the taxpayer, as defined in G.S. 105-273, for each parcel on which the taxing unit has a lien for unpaid taxes, together with the amount of taxes, penalties, interest, and costs that are a lien on it; the year or years for which the taxes are due; and a description of the property sufficient to permit its identification by parol testimony. The fees for docketing and indexing the certificate assessed pursuant to G.S. 7A-308(a)(11) are payable to the clerk of superior court at the time the taxes are collected or the property is sold.

(c) Notice to Taxpayer and Others. –

- (1) Notice required. – The tax collector filing the certificate provided for in subsection (b) of this section, shall, at least 30 days prior to docketing the judgment, send notice of the tax lien foreclosure to the taxpayer, as defined in G.S. 105-273, at the taxpayer's last known address and to all lienholders of record required to be served under G.S. 105-374(c).
- (2) Contents of notice. – The notice required by this subsection shall state that a judgment will be docketed and the proposed date of the docketing, state that execution will be issued as provided by law, provide a brief description of the real property affected, and state that the lien may be satisfied prior to judgment being entered.

- (3) Service of notice. – The notice required by this subsection shall be sent by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested.
- (4) Additional efforts may be required. – If within 10 days following the mailing of a notice, a return receipt has not been received by the tax collector indicating receipt of the notice, then the tax collector shall do both of the following:
 - a. Make reasonable efforts to locate and notify the taxpayer, if not yet notified, and all unnotified lienholders of record prior to the docketing of the judgment and the issuance of the execution. Reasonable efforts may include posting the notice in a conspicuous place on the property, or, if the property has an address to which mail may be delivered, mailing the notice by first-class mail to the attention of the occupant.
 - b. Have a notice published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county once a week for two consecutive weeks directed to, and naming, all unnotified lienholders and the taxpayer that a judgment will be docketed against the taxpayer.
- (5) Costs of notice added to lien. – All costs of mailing and publication, plus a charge of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00) to defray administrative costs, shall be added to the amount of taxes that are a lien on the real property and shall be paid by the taxpayer to the taxing unit at the time the taxes are collected or the property is sold.

(d) Effect of Docketing Certificate of Taxes Due. – Immediately upon the docketing and indexing of a certificate as provided in subsection (b) of this section, the taxes, penalties, interest, and costs constitute a valid judgment against the real property described in the judgment, with the priority provided for tax liens in G.S. 105-356. The judgment, except as expressly provided in this section, has the same force and effect as a duly rendered judgment of the superior court directing sale of the property for the satisfaction of the tax lien, and it shall bear interest at an annual rate of eight percent (8%).

(e) Special Assessments. – Street, sidewalk, and other special assessments may be included in any judgment for taxes taken under this section, or the special assessments may be included in a separate judgment docketed under this section. The tax collector may use the judgment as a method of foreclosing the lien of special assessments. When used to foreclose the lien of special assessments, the procedure may be instituted at any time after the assessment or installment falls due and remains unpaid; the waiting period required by subsection (b) of this section does not apply to the foreclosure of special assessments.

(f) Motion to Set Aside. – At any time prior to the issuance of execution, any person having an interest in the real property to be foreclosed may appear before the clerk of superior court and move to set aside the judgment on the ground that the tax has been paid or that the tax lien on which the judgment is based is invalid.

(g) Cancellation upon Payment. – Upon payment in full of any judgment docketed under this section, together with interest and costs accrued to the date of payment, the tax collector receiving payment shall certify the fact of the payment to the clerk of superior court and cancel the judgment.

(h) Relationship between G.S. 105-374 and This Section. – If, before the issuance of execution on the judgment under subsection (i) of this section, the taxing unit is made a defendant in a foreclosure action brought against the property under G.S. 105-374, it shall file an answer in

that proceeding and thereafter all proceedings shall be governed by order of the court in accordance with that section.

(i) Issuance of Execution. – At any time after three months and before two years from the indexing of the judgment as provided in subsection (b) of this section, execution shall be issued at the request of the tax collector in the same manner as executions are issued upon other judgments of the superior court, and the real property shall be sold by the sheriff in the same manner as other real property is sold under execution with the following exceptions:

- (1) No debtor's exemption shall be allowed.
- (2) At least 30 days prior to the day fixed for the sale, the sheriff shall send notice by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the taxpayer at the taxpayer's last known address, in lieu of personal service, and to all lienholders of record. If within 10 days following the mailing of a notice, a return receipt has not been received by the sheriff indicating receipt of the notice, then the sheriff shall make additional efforts to locate and notify the taxpayer, if not yet notified, and all unnotified lienholders of record of the sale under execution in accordance with subdivision (4) of subsection (c) of this section.
- (3) The sheriff shall add to the amount of the judgment as costs of the sale any postage expenses incurred by the tax collector and the sheriff in foreclosing under this section.
- (4) In any advertisement or posted notice of sale under execution, the sheriff may (and at the request of the governing body shall) combine the advertisements or notices for properties to be sold under executions against the properties of different taxpayers in favor of the same taxing unit or group of units; however, the property included in each judgment shall be separately described and the name of the taxpayer specified in connection with each property.

The purchaser at the execution sale acquires title to the property in fee simple free and clear of all claims, rights, interests, and liens except the liens of other taxes or special assessments not paid from the purchase price and not included in the judgment, liens arising from C-PACE assessments authorized under Article 10B of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, and conservation agreements, as defined in G.S. 121-35(1).

(i1) Fee. – The fee assessed in G.S. 7A-308(a)(1a) is payable to the clerk of superior court out of the sale proceeds at the time the property is sold.

(j) Attorney's Fee. – The governing body of the taxing unit may make whatever arrangement it deems satisfactory for compensating an attorney rendering assistance or advice in foreclosure proceedings brought under this section, but the attorney's fee shall not be added to the judgment as part of the costs of the action.

(k) Consolidation of Liens. – By agreement between the governing bodies, two or more taxing units may consolidate their tax liens for the purpose of docketing a judgment, or may have one execution issued for separate judgments, against the same property. In like manner, one execution may issue for separate judgments in favor of one or more taxing units against the same property for different years' taxes.

(l) Purchase and Resale by Taxing Unit. – The rights of a taxing unit to purchase real property at a foreclosure sale and resell it are governed by G.S. 105-376.

(m) Procedure if Section Declared Unconstitutional. – If any provisions of this section are declared invalid or unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of North Carolina, a United States district court of three judges, the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, or the United States

Supreme Court, all taxing units that have proceeded under this section shall have five years from the date of the filing of the opinion (or, in the case of appeal, from the date of the filing of the opinion on appeal) in which to institute foreclosure actions under G.S. 105-374 for all taxes included in judgments taken under this section and for subsequent taxes due or which, but for purchase of the property by the taxing unit, would have become due; and the judicial decision shall not have the effect of invalidating the tax lien or disturbing its priority. (1939, c. 310, s. 1720; 1945, c. 646; 1957, cc. 91, 1262; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1973, c. 108, s. 52; c. 681, ss. 1, 2; 1983, c. 808, s. 9; c. 855, ss. 1, 2; 1987, c. 450; 1989, c. 37, s. 7; c. 682; 1999-439, ss. 2, 3; 2001-139, s. 9; 2006-106, ss. 4-6; 2011-352, s. 1; 2019-243, s. 12(b); 2021-91, s. 3(b); 2022-55, s. 4(b); 2024-44, s. 2.)

§ 105-376. Taxing unit as purchaser at foreclosure sale; payment of purchase price; resale of property acquired by taxing unit.

(a) Taxing Unit as Purchaser. – Any taxing unit (or two or more taxing units jointly) may bid at a foreclosure sale conducted under G.S. 105-374 or G.S. 105-375, and any taxing unit that becomes the successful bidder may assign its bid at any time by private sale for not less than the amount of the bid.

(b) Payment of Purchase Price by Taxing Units; Status of Property Purchased by Taxing Units. – Any taxing unit that becomes the purchaser at a tax foreclosure sale may, in the discretion of its governing body, pay only that part of the purchase price that would not be distributed to it and other taxing units on account of taxes, penalties, interest, and such costs as accrued prior to the initiation of the foreclosure action under G.S. 105-374 or docketing of a judgment under G.S. 105-375. Thereafter, in such a case, the purchasing taxing unit shall hold the property for the benefit of all taxing units that have an interest in the property as defined in this subsection (b). All net income from real property so acquired and the proceeds thereof, when resold, shall be first used to reimburse the purchasing unit for disbursements actually made by it in connection with the foreclosure action and the purchase of the property, and any balance remaining shall be distributed to the taxing units having an interest therein in proportion to their interests. The total interest of each taxing unit, including the purchasing unit, shall be determined by adding:

- (1) The taxes of the unit, with penalties, interest, and costs (other than costs already reimbursed to the purchasing unit) to satisfy which the property was ordered sold;
- (2) Other taxes of the unit, with penalties, interest, and costs which would have been paid in full from the purchase price had the purchase price been paid in full;
- (3) Taxes of the unit, with penalties, interest, and costs to which the foreclosure sale was made subject; and
- (4) The principal amount of all taxes which became liens on the property after purchase at the foreclosure sale or which would have become liens thereon but for the purchase, but no amount shall be included for taxes for years in which (on the day as of which property was to be listed for taxation) the property was being used by the purchasing unit for a public purpose.

If the amount of net income and proceeds of resale distributable exceeds the total interests of all taxing units defined in this subsection (b), the remainder shall be applied to any special benefit assessments to satisfy which the sale was ordered or to which the sale was made subject, and any balance remaining shall accrue to the purchasing unit.

When any real property that has been purchased as provided in this section is permanently dedicated to use for a public purpose, the purchasing unit shall make settlement with other taxing units having an interest in the property (as defined in this subsection) in such manner and in such amount as may be agreed upon by the governing bodies; and if no agreement can be reached, the amount to be paid shall be determined by a resident judge of the superior court in the district in which the property is situated.

Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring the purchasing unit to secure the approval of other interested taxing units before reselling the property or as requiring the purchasing unit to pay other interested taxing units in full if the net income and resale price are insufficient to make such payments.

Any taxing unit purchasing property at a foreclosure sale may, in the discretion of its governing body, instead of following the foregoing provisions of this section, make full payment of the purchase price, and thereafter it shall hold the property as sole owner in the same manner as it holds other real property, subject only to taxes and special assessments, with penalties, interest, and costs, and liens arising from C-PACE assessments under Article 10B of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, to which the sale was made subject.

(c) **Resale of Real Property Purchased by Taxing Units.** – Real property purchased at a tax foreclosure sale by a taxing unit may be resold at any time (for such price as the governing body of the taxing unit may approve) at a sale conducted in the manner provided by law for sales of other real property of the taxing unit. However, a purchasing taxing unit, in the discretion of its governing body, may resell such property to the former owner or to any other person formerly having an interest in the property at private sale for an amount not less than the taxing unit's interest therein if it holds the property as sole owner or for an amount not less than the total interests of all taxing units (other than special assessments due the taxing unit holding title) if it holds the property for the benefit of all such units. (1939, c. 310, s. 1719; 1945, c. 635; 1947, c. 484, ss. 3, 4; 1951, c. 300, s. 1; c. 1036, s. 1; 1953, c. 176, s. 2; 1955, c. 908; 1967, c. 705, s. 1; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 2024-44, s. 3.1.)

§ 105-377. Time for contesting validity of tax foreclosure title.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of law prescribing the period for commencing an action, no action or proceeding shall be brought to contest the validity of any title to real property acquired by a taxing unit or by a private purchaser in any tax foreclosure action or proceeding authorized by this Subchapter or by other laws of this State in force at the time the title was acquired, nor shall any motion to reopen or set aside the judgment in any such tax foreclosure action or proceeding be entertained after one year from the date on which the deed is recorded. (1939, c. 310, s. 1721; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1977, c. 886, s. 2.)

§ 105-378. Limitation on use of remedies.

(a) **Use of Remedies Barred.** – No county or municipality shall maintain an action or procedure to enforce any remedy provided by law for the collection of taxes or the enforcement of any tax liens, whether the taxes or tax liens are evidenced by tax receipts or otherwise, unless the action or procedure is instituted within 10 years from the date the taxes became due.

(b) **Not Applicable to Special Assessments.** – Subsection (a) of this section does not apply to the lien of special assessments.

(c) **Repealed by Session Laws 1998-98, s. 26, effective August 14, 1998.**

(d) Enforcement and Collection Delayed Pending Appeal. – When the board of county commissioners or municipal governing body delivers a tax receipt to a tax collector for any assessment that has been or is subsequently appealed to the county board of equalization and review or the Property Tax Commission, the tax collector shall not seek collection of taxes or enforcement of a tax lien resulting from the assessment until the appeal has been finally adjudicated. The tax collector, however, may send an initial bill or notice to the taxpayer. (1933, c. 181, s. 7; c. 399; 1945, c. 832; 1947, c. 1065, s. 1; 1949, cc. 60, 269, 735; 1951, cc. 71, 306, 572; 1953, cc. 381, 427, 538, 645, 656, 752, 775, 1008; 1955, c. 1087; 1957, cc. 53, 678, 1123; 1959, cc. 373, 608; 1961, cc. 542, 695, 885; 1965, cc. 129, 294; 1967, c. 242; c. 321, s. 1; c. 422, s. 1; 1969, c. 96; 1971, c. 806, s. 1; 1998-98, s. 26; 2006-30, s. 6; 2011-3, s. 3(b); 2021-91, s. 3(d).)