

§ 160A-303.2. Regulation of abandonment of junked motor vehicles.

(a) A municipality may by ordinance regulate, restrain or prohibit the abandonment of junked motor vehicles on public grounds and on private property within the municipality's ordinance-making jurisdiction upon a finding that such regulation, restraint or prohibition is necessary and desirable to promote or enhance community, neighborhood or area appearance, and may enforce any such ordinance by removing or disposing of junked motor vehicles subject to the ordinance according to the procedures prescribed in this section. The authority granted by this section shall be supplemental to any other authority conferred upon municipalities. Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize a municipality to require the removal or disposal of a motor vehicle kept or stored at a bona fide "automobile graveyard" or "junkyard" as defined in G.S. 136-143.

For purposes of this section, the term "junked motor vehicle" means a vehicle that does not display a current license plate and that:

- (1) Is partially dismantled or wrecked; or
- (2) Cannot be self-propelled or moved in the manner in which it originally was intended to move; or
- (3) Is more than five years old and appears to be worth less than one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or is more than five years old and appears to be worth less than five hundred dollars (\$500.00) as provided by the municipality in an ordinance adopted under this section.
- (4) Repealed by Session Laws 2009-97, s. 2, effective October 1, 2009.

(a1) Any junked motor vehicle found to be in violation of an ordinance adopted pursuant to this section may be removed to a storage garage or area, but no such vehicle shall be removed from private property without the written request of the owner, lessee, or occupant of the premises unless the council or a duly authorized city official or employee finds in writing that the aesthetic benefits of removing the vehicle outweigh the burdens imposed on the private property owner. Such finding shall be based on a balancing of the monetary loss of the apparent owner against the corresponding gain to the public by promoting or enhancing community, neighborhood or area appearance. The following, among other relevant factors, may be considered:

- (1) Protection of property values;
- (2) Promotion of tourism and other economic development opportunities;
- (3) Indirect protection of public health and safety;
- (4) Preservation of the character and integrity of the community; and
- (5) Promotion of the comfort, happiness, and emotional stability of area residents.

(a2) The city may require any person requesting the removal of a junked or abandoned motor vehicle from private property to indemnify the city against any loss, expense, or liability incurred because of the removal, storage, or sale thereof. When an abandoned or junked motor vehicle is removed, the city shall give notice to the owner as required by G.S. 20-219.11(a) and (b).

(a3) Hearing Procedure. – Regardless of whether a city does its own removal and disposal of motor vehicles or contracts with another person to do so, the city shall provide a prior hearing procedure for the owner. For purposes of this subsection, the definitions in G.S. 20-219.9 apply.

- (1) If the city operates in such a way that the person who tows the vehicle is responsible for collecting towing fees, all provisions of Article 7A, Chapter 20, apply.

- (2) If the city operates in such a way that it is responsible for collecting towing fees, it shall:
- a. Provide by contract or ordinance for a schedule of reasonable towing fees,
 - b. Provide a procedure for a prompt fair hearing to contest the towing,
 - c. Provide for an appeal to district court from that hearing,
 - d. Authorize release of the vehicle at any time after towing by the posting of a bond or paying of the fees due, and
 - e. Provide a sale procedure similar to that provided in G.S. 44A-4, 44A-5, and 44A-6, except that no hearing in addition to the probable cause hearing is required. If no one purchases the vehicle at the sale and if the value of the vehicle is less than the amount of the lien, the city may destroy it.

(a4) Any person who removes a vehicle pursuant to this section shall not be held liable for damages for the removal of the vehicle to the owner, lienholder or other person legally entitled to the possession of the vehicle removed; however, any person who intentionally or negligently damages a vehicle in the removal of such vehicle, or intentionally or negligently inflicts injury upon any person in the removal of such vehicle, may be held liable for damages.

(b) Any ordinance adopted pursuant to this section shall include a prohibition against removing or disposing of any motor vehicle that is used on a regular basis for business or personal use. (1983, c. 841, s. 2; 1985, c. 737, s. 2; 1987, c. 42, s. 2; c. 451, s. 2; 1989, c. 3; c. 743, s. 2; 2005-10, ss. 2, 3; 2006-15, s. 3; 2006-166, s. 2; 2006-171, s. 1; 2007-208, s. 2; 2007-505, s. 3; 2009-97, s. 2.)