

ORDINANCE NO. 2016-10

**AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING UNSAFE STRUCTURES
AND DANGEROUS BUILDINGS.**

WHEREAS, within the City of Pinson, Alabama (“the City”), there exists and/or may exist in the future parcels of real property that due to poor design, obsolescence, or neglect, have become unsafe to the extent of becoming public nuisances, and;

WHEREAS, much of this property is vacant or in a state of disrepair and is causing or may cause a blight or blighting influence on the City and the neighborhoods in which the property is located, and;

WHEREAS, such property constitutes a threat to the health, safety, and welfare to the citizens of the City and is an impediment to economic development within the City, and;

WHEREAS, in compliance with Sections 11-40-30 through 11-40-36, inclusive, of the *Code of Alabama* (1975) and in compliance with Sections 11-53B-1 through 11-53B-16, inclusive, of the *Code of Alabama* (1975), the City Council of Pinson, Alabama (“the Council”) desires to amend its policies and procedures for repairing, moving or demolishing buildings and structures, or parts of buildings and structures, party walls, and foundations when found to be unsafe to the extent of being a public nuisance from any cause; and

WHEREAS, the Council desires that the City employ, alternatively, all tools provided by law to the City for the fixing of costs, creation of liens, making of assessments, and collection of costs associated with repairing, moving or demolishing buildings and structures, or parts of

buildings and structures, party walls, and foundations when found to be unsafe to the extent of being a public nuisance from any cause, including but not limited to Section 6-5-122 of the *Code of Alabama* (1975), Sections 11-40-30 through 11-40-36, inclusive, of the *Code of Alabama* (1975), Sections 11-47-117 through 11-47-118, inclusive, of the *Code of Alabama* (1975), Section 11-47-131, of the *Code of Alabama* (1975), Sections 11-53-1 through 11-53-4, inclusive, of the *Code of Alabama* (1975), and Sections 11-53B-1 through 11-53B-16, inclusive, of the *Code of Alabama* (1975).

THEREFORE, BE IT NOW ORDAINED by the Council of Pinson, Alabama, as follows:

Section 1. Establishment of Unsafe Structures and Dangerous Buildings Code.

This Ordinance, as amended, shall be referenced as the City's "Unsafe Structures and Dangerous Buildings Code."

Section 2. Duties of Appropriate Municipal Official.

(a) The term "Appropriate Municipal Official" as used in this Ordinance shall mean the City building official, any City building inspections officer or deputy and any other City official or City employee designated by the Mayor as the person to exercise the authority and perform the duties delegated by this Ordinance.

(b) The Appropriate Municipal Official may:

- (1) Inspect, or cause to be inspected, semiannually all public buildings, halls, churches, theatres, hotels, tenements, commercial manufacturing or loft buildings for the purpose of determining whether any conditions exist which render any such place a "dangerous building" as defined by this Ordinance;
- (2) Inspect any building, wall or structure about which complaints are filed by any person to the effect that a building, wall or structure is, or may be, existing in violation of this Ordinance;

- (3) Inspect any building, wall or structure reported (as hereinafter provided for) by the fire department or police department as probably existing in violation of the terms of this Ordinance; and
- (4) Perform such other duties as are set forth in this Ordinance.

(c) The Appropriate Municipal Official is hereby authorized and directed to enforce all of the provisions of this Ordinance. Upon presentation of the proper credentials, the Appropriate Municipal Official may enter any building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, foundation, or premises for the purpose of inspection, to prevent violation of the provisions of this Ordinance, and/or to carry out an order given pursuant to this Ordinance.

Section 3. Dangerous buildings defined.

Any building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation which has any of the following defects may be deemed a "dangerous building":

- (1) Those whose interior walls or other vertical structure members list, lean, or buckle to such an extent that a plumb line passing through the center of gravity falls outside of the middle third of its base;
- (2) Those which, exclusive of the foundation, show thirty-three (33) percent, or more, of damage or deterioration of one (1) or more supporting members, or fifty (50) percent of damage or deterioration of the non-supporting enclosing or outside walls or covering;
- (3) Those which have improperly distributed loads upon the floors or roofs, or in which the same are overloaded, or which have insufficient strength to be reasonably safe for the purpose used;
- (4) Those which have been damaged by fire, wind, earthquake, flood, sinkhole, deterioration, neglect, abandonment, vandalism, or any other cause so as to have become dangerous to life, health, property, morals, safety, or general welfare of the public or the occupants;
- (5) Those which have become or are so damaged, dilapidated, decayed, unsafe, unsanitary, lacking in maintenance, vermin or rat infested, containing filth or contamination, lacking proper ventilation, lacking sufficient illumination, or which so utterly fail to provide the amenities essential to decent living that they are unfit for human habitation, or are likely to cause sickness or disease, so as to work injury to the life, health, property, morals, safety, or general welfare of the public or the occupants;

- (6) Those having light, air, heating, cooling, and sanitation facilities which are inadequate to protect the life, health, property, morals, safety, or general welfare of the public or the occupants;
- (7) Those having inadequate facilities for egress in case of fire or panic, or those having insufficient stairways, elevators, fire escapes, or other means of ingress and egress to and from said building;
- (8) Those which do not provide minimum safeguards to protect or warn occupants in the event of fire;
- (9) Those which contain unsafe equipment, including any boiler, heating equipment, elevator, moving stairway, electrical wiring or device, flammable liquid containers, or other equipment on the premises or within the structure which is in such disrepair or condition that such equipment is a hazard to the life, health, property, morals, safety, or general welfare of the public or the occupants;
- (10) Those which are so damaged, decayed, dilapidated, structurally unsafe, or of such fault construction or unstable foundation that partial or complete collapse is possible;
- (11) Those which have parts thereof which are so attached that they may fall and damage property or injure the public or the occupants;
- (12) Those, or any portion thereof, which are clearly unsafe for their use or occupancy;
- (13) Those which are neglected, damaged, dilapidated, unsecured, or abandoned so as to become an attractive nuisance to children who might play in or on the building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation to their danger, becomes a harbor for vagrants, criminals, or immoral persons, or enables persons to resort to the building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation for committing a nuisance or an unlawful act;
- (14) Those which have any portion remaining on a site after the demolition or destruction of the same or whenever the building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation is abandoned so as to constitute such building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation as an attractive nuisance or hazard to the public;

- (15) Those which because of their condition are unsafe, unsanitary, or dangerous to the life, health, property, morals, safety, or general welfare of the public or the occupants; and
- (16) Those with a condition or conditions that violate the City's technical codes adopted from time to time if such violation(s) are unsafe to the extent of becoming a public nuisance.

Section 4. Buildings defined.

For purposes of this Ordinance, the term "building" is deemed to include all structures, appurtenances, improvements, and items on the property, whether or not attached to or apart of the main structure, including, but not limited to, houses, garages, sheds, carports, other accessory structures, pools, as well as any items located therein or on the subject property, including, junk, rubbish, trash, litter, grass and weeds (as defined by Ordinance No. 2011-09 of the City, as may be amended), junked motor vehicles, and/or any other matter declared a nuisance under existing law.

Section 5. Dangerous buildings constitute nuisances.

All "dangerous buildings" are hereby declared to be public nuisances, and may be repaired, vacated, moved, or demolished as provided by this Ordinance.

Section 6. Standards for repair, move, vacation, or demolition.

The following standards may be followed in substance by the Appropriate Municipal Official in ordering a repair, move, demolition, and/or vacation:

- (1) If any building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation can reasonably be repaired within a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost relative to the value of the structure so that it will no longer exist in violation of the terms of this Ordinance, it may be ordered to be repaired.
- (2) If any building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation can reasonably be moved so that it will no longer exist in violation of the terms of this Ordinance, it may be ordered to be moved.
- (3) In any case where any building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation is substantially damaged or decayed, or deteriorated from its original value or structure (not including the value of the land), it may be demolished, and in all cases where any building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation cannot be reasonably repaired so that it will no longer exist in violation of the terms

of this Ordinance, it may be demolished. In all cases where any building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation is a fire hazard existing in violation of the terms of this Ordinance, it may be demolished.

- (4) If any building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation is in such condition as to make it dangerous to the life, health, property, morals, safety, or general welfare of the public or the occupants, it and/or the entirety or other portion of the premises upon which it is located may be ordered to be vacated.

Where one or more of the standards above may apply, the Appropriate Municipal Official may, in his sole discretion, choose to order any one, any combination, or all of the foregoing remedies.

Section 7. Notice from Appropriate Municipal Official of unsafe condition.

(a) Whenever the Appropriate Municipal Official of the City finds that any building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation situated in the City is unsafe to the extent that it is a public nuisance, the Appropriate Municipal Official may, as set forth in this Section, give notice to remedy the unsafe or dangerous condition of the building or structure. The notice shall identify the street address, the legal description, and the parcel identification number of the property where the building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation is located. The notice shall set forth in detail the basis for the Appropriate Municipal Official's finding and shall direct the owner or owners to take either of the following actions:

- (1) In the case where repair is required, accomplish the specified repairs or improvements within a reasonable time set out in the notice, which time shall not be less than forty-five (45) days of the date of the notice or if the same cannot be repaired within that time to provide the Appropriate Municipal Official with a work plan to accomplish the repairs, which plan shall be submitted within forty-five (45) days of the making of the notice and shall be subject to the approval of the Council.
- (2) In the case where a move or demolition is required, move or demolish the building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation within a reasonable time set out in the notice, which time shall not be less than forty-five (45) days of the notice.

The notice shall state that, in the event the owner does not comply within the time specified therein, the repairs, the move, or the demolition shall be accomplished by the City and the cost thereof assessed against the property. The repair, move, or demolition must be completed to the Appropriate Municipal Official's satisfaction, or the same may be completed and accomplished by the City and the cost thereof assessed against the property. The notice shall inform the

recipients that a public hearing as provided for by Section 8(a) shall be held on the finding of the Appropriate Municipal Official at a date, time, and location specified in the notice.

The Appropriate Municipal Official may also order that any building, structure, or part of building or structure ordered to be repaired, moved, or demolished be vacated along such terms as the Appropriate Municipal Official deems appropriate.

(b) The Appropriate Municipal Official shall give the notice required by Subsection (a) of this Section by all of the following means:

- (1) By certified or registered mail, properly addressed and postage prepaid, to all of the following persons or entities:
 - i. The person or persons, firm, association, or corporation last assessing the property for state taxes to the address on file in the Jefferson County Tax Collector's Office;
 - ii. The record property owner or owners (including any owner or owners of an interest in the property) as shown from a search of the records of the office of the Judge of Probate of Jefferson County, Alabama, at the owner or owners' last known address and at the address of the subject property;
 - iii. All mortgagees of record as shown from a search of the records of the office of the Judge of Probate of Jefferson County, Alabama, to the address set forth in the mortgage or, if no address for the mortgagee is set forth in the mortgage, to the address determined to be the correct address by the Appropriate Municipal Official;
 - iv. All lien holders of record as shown from a search of the records of the office of the Judge of Probate of Jefferson County, Alabama, to the address set forth in the statement of lien or, if no address for the lien holder is set forth in the statement of lien, to the address determined to be the correct address by the Appropriate Municipal Official; and
 - v. Any person who is otherwise known to the Clerk or to the Appropriate Municipal Official to have an interest in the property;
- (2) By posting notice of the order, or a copy thereof, within three (3) days of the date of mailing required by Subsection (b)(1) of this Section, at or within three feet of an entrance to the building or structure. If there is no entrance, the notice may be posted at any location on the building or structure; and

- (3) By recording notice of the order, or a copy thereof, in the office of the Judge of Probate of Jefferson County, Alabama, on or before the date of mailing required by Subsection (b)(1) of this Section.

(c) In addition to the required notice provisions in Subsection (b) of this Section, the Appropriate Municipal Official may, in his sole discretion, publish a short form of the notice described in Subsection (a) of this Section in the *The Alabama Messenger* or other publication of general circulation in Jefferson County, Alabama.

(d) In the event that the identity of the record property owner(s) cannot be ascertained after a reasonably diligent search, the Appropriate Municipal Official, in addition to complying with the applicable notice provisions in Subsection (b) of this Section, shall issue notice to the unknown property owner(s) by publishing a short form of the notice described in Subsection (a) of this Section in the *The Alabama Messenger* or other publication of general circulation in Jefferson County, Alabama, once a week for four consecutive weeks.

(e) A failure by the Council to act on the findings of the Appropriate Municipal Official within one hundred twenty (120) days from the date of mailing required by Subsection (b)(1) of this Section shall constitute an abdication of the Appropriate Municipal Official's findings. However, this shall in no way prevent the City from reinitiating the proceedings authorized by this Ordinance at any time so long as all the requirements of this Ordinance are satisfied anew. Furthermore, this does not require that the ordered demolition, move, or repairs take place within one hundred twenty (120) days from the date of mailing required by Subsection (b)(1) of this Section.

Section 8. Hearings, appeals, and extensions.

(a) After the time specified in the notice provided for by Section 7(a) but no less than fifty (50) days from the date the notice is given as provided for by Section 7(b)(1), whichever is later, if the owner of any property cited hereunder fails to comply with the notice prescribed, the Council shall hold a public hearing to receive any objections to the finding by the Appropriate Municipal Official that the building or structure is unsafe to the extent of becoming a public nuisance. A written request for a public hearing is not necessary. At the public hearing, the Council shall also receive any written objections to the finding by the Appropriate Municipal Official. Any such written objection must be submitted to the Clerk prior to the start of the Council meeting at which the public hearing is held. No action shall be taken on the finding of the Appropriate Municipal Official until determination thereon is made by the Council.

(b) Upon holding the hearing, the Council may determine whether or not the building or structure is unsafe to the extent that it is a public nuisance. If it is determined by the Council that the building or structure is unsafe to the extent that it is a public nuisance, the Council may take either of the following actions:

- (1) In the case where repair is required, order repair of the building at the expense of the City and assess the expenses of the repair on the land on which the building stands or to which it is attached.
- (2) In the case where a move or demolition is required, order moving or demolition of the building at the expense of the City and assess the expenses of the move or demolition on the land on which the building stands or to which it is attached.

The Council may also order that any building, structure, or part of building or structure to be repaired, moved, or demolished be vacated along such terms as the Council deems appropriate.

(c) Any person aggrieved by the decision of the Council at the hearing may, within ten (10) days thereafter, appeal to the Circuit Court of Jefferson County, Alabama, upon filing with the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Jefferson County, Alabama, notice of the appeal and bond for security of costs in the form and amount to be approved by the Circuit Clerk. Upon filing of the notice of appeal and approval of the bond, the Circuit Clerk of the court shall serve a copy of the notice of appeal on the Clerk and the appeal shall be docketed in the Circuit Court, and shall be a preferred case therein. The Clerk shall, upon receiving the notice, file with the Circuit Clerk a copy of the findings and determination of the Council in its proceedings. Any trials shall be held without jury upon the determination of the Council that the building or structure is unsafe to the extent that it is a public nuisance.

(d) After twenty (20) days of the decision of the Council, if a repair, move, or demolition is ordered by the Council and if an appeal has not been taken to the Circuit Court as provided for by Subsection 8(c), then the repair, move, or demolition may be accomplished by the City by the use of its own forces, or it may provide by contract for the repair or demolition. In the event that an appeal is taken to the Circuit Court as provided for by Subsection 8(c), once a judgment authorizing a repair, move, or demolition becomes final as provided by law, then the repair, the move, or the demolition may be accomplished by the City by the use of its own forces, or it may provide by contract for the repair, the move, or the demolition.

(e) A failure by the City to accomplish the repair, move, or demolition of a building, structure, part of building or structure, party wall, or foundation within one hundred eighty (180) days of the passage of the resolution ordering the same shall constitute an abdication of the Council's order unless one of the following conditions is satisfied:

- (1) An aggrieved party has filed an appeal pursuant to or allegedly pursuant to this Ordinance;
- (2) A court of competent jurisdiction has enjoined or otherwise halted the repair, move, or demolition;

- (3) All parties identified by the Appropriate Municipal Official pursuant to Section 7(b)(1) have entered into a written agreement allowing for an extended period of time within which the repair, move, or demolition may be accomplished;
- (4) All parties identified by the Appropriate Municipal Official pursuant to Section 7(b)(1) have noted at a meeting of the Council their agreement allowing for an extended period of time within which the repair, move, or demolition may be accomplished and the agreement is reflected in the minutes of the Council; or
- (5) Further action is taken by the Council as provided by Subsection (f) of this Section.

(f) If for any reason an ordered repair, move, or demolition cannot be accomplished within one hundred eighty (180) days of the passage of the resolution ordering the same, the Appropriate Municipal Official shall make a report of the same and the length of any desired extension to the Council. The Clerk shall distribute a copy of the report to the members of the Council. The Clerk shall set the report on the proposed extension for a public hearing at a meeting of the Council. The Clerk shall give no less than ten (10) days' notice of the meeting at which the proposed extension is to be considered by certified mail to all persons or entities listed in Section 7(b)(1). Notice shall be deemed complete upon mailing. Any person, firm, or corporation having an interest in the property may be heard at the meeting as to any objection to the proposed extension or the length thereof. Following the public hearing, the Council may adopt a resolution extending the time for the repair, move, or demolition to be accomplished for such period of time as it deems necessary. The Council need not order an extension before the time to complete the repair, move, or demolition expires in order for the extension to be effective, but if the Council desires to extend the time to complete the repair, move, or demolition, then the Council must order the extension no more than sixty (60) days after the expiration of the then existing deadline to complete the repair, move, or demolition. The Council may order repeated extensions if the process set forth in this Subsection is followed for each extension.

(g) Nothing in this Ordinance shall prevent the City from reinitiating the proceedings authorized by this Ordinance at any time so long as all the requirements of this Ordinance are satisfied anew.

(h) The City may sell or otherwise dispose of salvaged materials resulting from any demolition pursuant to this Ordinance.

Section 9. Fixing of costs as final assessment.

(a) Upon repair, move, or demolition of the building or structure, the Appropriate Municipal Official shall make a report to the Council of the cost thereof by tendering a copy of

the report to the Clerk. The Clerk shall distribute a copy of the report to the members of the Council. The proceeds of any moneys received from the sale of salvaged materials from the building or structure shall be used or applied against the cost of demolition. The Clerk shall set the report of costs for a public hearing at a meeting of the Council.

(b) The Clerk shall give no less than ten (10) days' notice of the meeting at which the fixing of the costs is to be considered by certified mail to all persons or entities listed in Section 7(b)(1). Notice shall be deemed complete upon mailing.

(c) Any person, firm, or corporation having an interest in the property may be heard at the meeting as to any objection to the fixing of the costs or the amounts thereof.

(d) Following the public hearing, the Council may adopt a resolution fixing the costs which it finds were reasonably incurred in the repair, the move, or the demolition and assessing the costs against the lot or lots, parcel or parcels of land upon which the building or structure was located ("the final assessment").

Section 10. Tax lien for the final assessment of a move or demolition.

(a) The final assessment for a move or demolition once made and confirmed by the Council shall constitute a lien on the property for the amount of the final assessment. The lien shall be superior to all other liens on the property except liens for taxes, and shall continue in force until paid. The Clerk shall file a certified copy of the resolution in the office of the Judge of Probate of Jefferson County, Alabama, and with the Jefferson County Tax Collector's office. In the case of a final assessment resulting from a move or demolition accomplished pursuant to this Ordinance, upon filing, the Tax Collector of the county shall add the amount of the lien to the ad valorem tax bill on the property and shall collect the amount as if it were a tax and remit the amount to the City.

(b) The City may assess the final assessment of a move or demolition against any lot or lots, parcel or parcels of land purchased by the State of Alabama at any sale for the nonpayment of taxes, and where the assessment is made against the lot or lots, parcel or parcels of land, a subsequent redemption thereof by any person authorized to redeem, or sale thereof by the state, shall not operate to discharge, or in any manner affect the lien of the City for the assessment, but any redemptioner or purchaser at any sale by the State of any lot or lots, parcel or parcels of land upon which an assessment has been levied, whether prior to or subsequent to a sale to the State for the nonpayment of taxes, shall take the same subject to the assessment. The assessment shall then be added to the tax bill of the property, collected as a tax, and remitted to the City.

Section 11. Payment of assessments.

(a) Payment of a final assessment resulting from a move or demolition accomplished pursuant to this Ordinance shall be made in the manner and as provided for the payment of

municipal improvement assessments in Section 11-48-48 of the *Code of Alabama* (1975), as the same has heretofore or may hereafter be amended. Upon the property owner's failure to pay the assessment, the officer designated by the City to collect the assessments shall proceed to collect the assessment as provided in Sections 11-48-49 to 11-48-60, inclusive, of the *Code of Alabama* (1975). The City may, in the latter notice, elect to have the Tax Collector collect the assessment by adding the assessment to the tax bill. Upon the election, the Tax Collector shall collect the assessment using all methods available for collecting ad valorem taxes.

(b) Payment of a final assessment resulting from a repair accomplished pursuant to this Ordinance shall be made in the manner and as provided in Section 11-53B-7 of the *Code of Alabama* (1975), as the same has heretofore or may hereafter be amended. Upon the property owner's failure to pay the assessment, the officer designated by the City to collect the assessments shall proceed to collect the assessment as provided in Sections 11-53B-8 to 11-53B-14, inclusive, of the *Code of Alabama* (1975).

Section 12. Emergency action.

(a) The Appropriate Municipal Official is hereby authorized to initiate the immediate repair, move, or demolition of a building, structure, or portion thereof when in the opinion of the Appropriate Municipal Official such emergency action is required due to imminent danger of structural collapse endangering adjoining property, the public right of way, or human life or health. In the case of emergency action pursuant to this Subsection (a), the Appropriate Municipal Official may promptly cause such building, structure, or portion thereof to be made safe, secured, or removed. For this purpose, the Appropriate Municipal Official may at once enter such structure with such assistance and at such cost as the Appropriate Municipal Official may deem necessary. The Appropriate Municipal Official may vacate adjacent structures and protect the public by appropriate fence or such other means as may be necessary, and for this purpose, the Appropriate Municipal Official may close a public or private way.

(b) Alternatively, the Council is hereby authorized to, by resolution or motion reflected upon the minutes of its proceedings, order the immediate repair, move, or demolition of a building, structure, or portion thereof when in the opinion of the Council such emergency action is required due to imminent danger of any type endangering adjoining property, the public right of way, or human life or health. In the case of emergency action pursuant to this Subsection (b), the Council may promptly order and cause such building, structure, or portion thereof to be made safe, secured, or removed. The Council may vacate adjacent structures and protect the public by appropriate fence or such other means as may be necessary, and for this purpose, the Council may close a public or private way.

(c) To the extent that the circumstances allow without furthering the risk of harm or danger, prior to taking any action, the Appropriate Municipal Official or the Council as applicable shall attempt to give actual notice of the proposed action to those persons and/or entities identified in Section 7(b)(1) and seek to secure their cooperation.