

**AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE REMOVAL AND DISPOSITION  
OF ABANDONED, NUISANCE AND JUNKED MOTOR VEHICLES**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Commissioners of Wayne County is authorized to regulate, restrain or prohibit abandoned, nuisance and junked motor vehicles on public and private property within the County’s ordinance-making jurisdiction; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Commissioners of Wayne County finds it necessary and desirable to promote or enhance:

1. The quality of attractiveness and aesthetic appearance of the County;
2. The protection of property values throughout the County;
3. The preservation of the livability and attractiveness of neighborhoods;
4. The promotion of tourism, conventions, and other opportunities for economic development for the County.
5. The attractiveness of the County’s thoroughfares and commercial roads within the County which present the primary public visibility to visitors and to passers-by of the County; and
6. The promotion of the comfort, health, happiness, and emotional stability of occupants of property in the vicinity of junked motor vehicles.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF WAYNE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA:**

**Section 1:**

That a new Ordinance entitled “Abandoned, Nuisance and Junked Motor Vehicles” is hereby adopted to read as follows:

**ABANDONED, NUISANCE AND JUNKED VEHICLES**

Statement of the Policy:

The Wayne County Board of Commissioners has found it necessary and desirable to promote and enhance:

1. The quality of attractiveness and aesthetic appearance of Wayne County;
2. The protection of property values throughout Wayne County;
3. The preservation of the livability and attractiveness of neighborhoods;
4. The promotion of tourism, conventions, and other opportunities for economic development for Wayne County;
5. The attractiveness of Wayne County’s thoroughfares and commercial roads, which present the primary public visibility to visitors and to passers-by of Wayne County; and
6. The promotion of the comfort, health, happiness, and emotional stability of occupants of property in the vicinity of junked motor vehicles.

**Section 2 - Administration:**

The Sheriff and the County Enforcement Officer shall be responsible for the administration and enforcement of this Ordinance. The Sheriff shall be responsible for administering the removal and disposition of vehicles determined to be “abandoned” on the public streets and highways within Wayne County over which it has any authority, and on property owned by Wayne County. The County Enforcement Officer shall be responsible for administering the removal and disposition of “abandoned, nuisance or junked motor vehicles” located on private property. Wayne County may contract with private tow truck operators or towing businesses to remove, store, and dispose of abandoned vehicles, nuisance vehicles and junked motor vehicles and in compliance with this Ordinance

and applicable state laws. Nothing in this Ordinance shall be construed to limit the legal authority or powers of law enforcement officers in enforcing other laws or in otherwise carrying out their duties. The County Manager shall designate one or more individuals as the County Enforcement Officer or Officers.

**Section 3 – Definitions:**

For the purpose of this Ordinance, certain words and terms are defined as herein indicated:

- (a) Abandoned vehicle – As authorized and defined in G. S. 153A-132, an abandoned motor vehicle is one that:
  - (1) Is left upon a public street or highway in violation of a law or ordinance prohibiting parking; or
  - (2) Is left on a public street or highway for longer than seven (7) days; or
  - (3) Is left on property owned or operated by the County for longer than twenty- four (24) hours; or
  - (4) Is left on private property without the consent of the owner, occupant or lessee thereof, for longer than two (2) hours.
  
- (b) Authorizing official – The County Enforcement Officer is designated to authorize the removal of vehicles under the provisions of this Ordinance.
  
- (c) Motor vehicle or vehicles – All machines designed or intended to travel over land by self-propulsion or while attached to any self-propelled vehicle.
  
- (d) Junked motor vehicle – As authorized and defined in G. S. 153A-132.2 the term, junked motor vehicle, means a vehicle that does not display a current license plate lawfully upon that vehicle 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 (5) years old and appears to be worth less than one hundred dollars (\$10000); or
  - (4) Does not display a current license plate.
  
- (e) Nuisance vehicle – A vehicle on public or private property that is determined and declared to be a health or safety hazard, a public nuisance, and unlawful, including a vehicle found to be:
  - (1) A breeding ground or harbor for mosquitoes, other insects, rats or other pests; or
  - (2) A point of heavy growth of weeds or other noxious vegetation over eight (8) inches in height; or
  - (3) A point of collection of pools or ponds of water; or
  - (4) A point of concentration of quantities of gasoline, oil or other flammable or explosive materials as evidenced by odor; or
  - (5) One which has areas of confinement which cannot be operated from the inside, such as trunks, hoods, etc.; or
  - (6) So situated or located that there is a danger of it falling or turning over; or
  - (7) One which is a point of collection of garbage, food waste, animal waste, or any other rotten or putrescent matter of any kind; or
  - (8) One which has sharp parts thereof which are jagged or contain sharp edges of metal or glass; or
  - (9) Any other vehicle specifically declared a health and safety hazard and a public nuisance by the Wayne County Board of Commissioners.

**Section 4 – Abandoned Vehicle Unlawful; Removal Authorized:**

- (a) It shall be unlawful for the registered owner or person entitled to possession of a vehicle to cause or allow such vehicle to be abandoned as the term is defined herein.

- (b) Upon investigation, the County Enforcement Officer may determine that a vehicle is an abandoned vehicle and order the vehicle removed.

**Section 5 – Nuisance Vehicle Unlawful; Removal Authorized:**

- (a) It shall be unlawful for the registered owner or person entitled to possession of a motor vehicle, or for the owner, lessee, or occupant of the real property upon which to remain on the property after it has been declared a nuisance vehicle.
- (b) Upon investigation, the County Enforcement Officer may determine and declare that a vehicle is a health or safety hazard and a nuisance vehicle as defined above, and order the vehicle removed.

**Section 6 – Junked Motor Vehicle Regulated; Removal Authorized:**

- (a) It shall be unlawful for the registered owner or person entitled to the possession of a junked motor vehicle, or upon which a junked motor vehicle is located, to leave or allow the vehicle to remain on the property after the vehicle has been ordered removed.
- (b) It shall be unlawful to abandon a junked vehicle or to have a junked motor vehicle, as defined herein, on the premises of public or private property.
- (c) Upon investigation, the County Enforcement Officer may order the removal of a junked motor vehicle as defined in this Ordinance after finding in writing that the aesthetic benefits of removing the vehicle outweigh the burdens imposed on the private property owner. Such findings 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 neighborhood; and
  - (5) Promotion of the comfort, health, happiness and emotional stability of area residents.
- (d) Junked motor vehicles which are kept within buildings, fenced enclosures that prevent their view from outside of the property, or which are covered by a cloth or plastic cover which has been specifically manufactured for the covering of vehicles are not to be removed without the consent of the owner of the property where they are being maintained.
- (e) Wayne County may require a person requesting the removal from private property of any junk motor vehicle to indemnify Wayne County against any loss, expense or liability incurred because of the vehicles removal, storage or sale.

**Section 7 – Removal of Abandoned, Nuisance or Junked Motor Vehicles; Pre-towing Notice Requirement:**

Except as set forth in Section 8 below, an abandoned, nuisance or junked vehicle which is to be removed, shall be towed or removed only after notice to the registered owner or person entitled to possession of the vehicle. In the case of a nuisance vehicle or a junked motor vehicle, if the names and mailing addresses of the registered owner or person entitled to the possession of the vehicle, or the owner, lessee, or occupant of the real property upon which the vehicle is located can be ascertained in the exercise of reasonable diligence, the notice shall be given by first class mail. The person who mails the notice(s) shall retain a written record to show the name(s) and address (es) to which mailed and the date mailed. If such names and addresses cannot be ascertained or if the

vehicle to be removed is an abandoned motor vehicle, notice shall be given by affixing on the windshield or some other conspicuous place on the vehicle a notice indicating that the vehicle will be removed by the County on a specified date. The notices shall state that the vehicle will be removed by the County on a specific date, no sooner than seven (7) days after the notice is affixed or mailed, unless the vehicle is moved by the owner or legal possessor prior to that time.

With respect to abandoned vehicles on private property, nuisance vehicles and junked motor vehicles to which notice is required to be given, if the registered owner or person entitled to possession does not remove the vehicle but chooses to appeal the determination that the vehicle is abandoned, a nuisance vehicle or in the case of a junked motor vehicle that the aesthetic benefits of removing the vehicle outweigh the burdens, such appeal shall be made to the Board of Commissioners in writing, heard at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board, and further proceedings to remove the vehicle shall be stayed until the appeal is heard and decided.

**Section 8 – Exception to Prior Notice Requirement:**

The requirement that notice be given prior to the removal of an abandoned, nuisance or junked motor vehicle may, as determined by the authorizing official, be omitted in those circumstances where there is a special need for prompt action to eliminate traffic obstruction or to otherwise maintain and protect the public safety and welfare. Such findings shall, in all cases, be entered by the authorizing official in the appropriate daily records. Circumstances justifying the removal of vehicle without prior notice includes:

- (a) Vehicles abandoned on streets or highways. For vehicles left on public streets and highways over which Wayne County has authority the Board of Commissioners hereby determines that immediate removal of such vehicles may be warranted when they are:
  - (1) Obstructing traffic; or
  - (2) Parked in violation of an ordinance or other law or regulation prohibiting or restricting parking; or
  - (3) Parked in a no-stopping or standing zone; or
  - (4) Parked in loading zones; or
  - (5) Parked in bus zones; or
  - (6) Parked in violation of temporary parking restriction imposed by Ordinances or other laws or regulations.
  
- (b) Other abandoned or nuisance vehicles. With respect to abandoned or nuisance vehicles left on County-owned property other than the streets and highway, and on private property, such vehicles may be removed without giving prior notice only in those circumstances where the authorizing official finds a special need for prompt action to protect and maintain the public health, safety and welfare. By way of illustration and not of limitation, such circumstances include vehicles blocking or obstructing ingress or egress to businesses and residences, vehicles parked in such a location or manner as to pose a traffic hazard, and vehicles causing damage to public or private property.

**Section 9 – Removal of Vehicle; Post-Towing Notice Requirements:**

Any abandoned, nuisance or junked motor vehicle which has been ordered removed may, as directed by the County, be removed to a storage garage or area by the tow truck operator or towing business contracting to perform such services for the County. Whenever such a vehicle is removed, the County official shall immediately notify the last known registered owner of the vehicle, such notice to include the following:

- (1) The description of the removed vehicle;
- (2) The location where the vehicle is stored;
- (3) The violation with which the owner is charged, if any;
- (4) The procedure the owner must follow to redeem the vehicle; and
- (5) The procedure the owner must follow to request a probable cause hearing on the removal.

The County shall attempt to give notice to the vehicle owner by telephone; however, whether or not the owner is reached by telephone, written notice, including the information set forth in subsections (1) through (5) above, shall also be mailed to the registered owner's last known address, unless this notice is waived in writing by the vehicle owner or his agent.

If the vehicle is registered in North Carolina, notice shall be given within twenty-four (24) hours. If the vehicle is not registered in the State, notice shall be given to the registered owner within seventy-two (72) hours from the removal of the vehicle.

Whenever an abandoned, nuisance or junked motor vehicle is removed and such vehicle has no valid registration or registration plates, the authorizing County official shall make reasonable efforts, including checking the vehicle identification number, to determine the last known registered owner of the vehicle and to notify him of the information set forth in subsections (1) through (5) above.

**Section 10 – Right to Probable Cause Hearing before Sale or Final Disposition of Vehicle:**

After the removal of an abandoned vehicle, nuisance vehicle or junked motor vehicle, the owner or any other person entitled to possession is entitled to a hearing for the purpose of determining if probable cause existed for removing the vehicle. A request for hearing must be filed in writing with the county magistrate designated by the chief district court judge to receive such hearing requests. The magistrate will set the hearing within seventy-two (72) hours of receipt of the request, and the hearing will be conducted in accordance with the provisions of G. S. 20-219.11, as amended.

**Section 11 – Redemption of during Proceedings:**

At any stage in the proceedings, including before the probable cause hearing, the owner may obtain possession of the removed vehicle by paying a towing fee, including any storage charges, or by posting a bond for double the amount of such fees and charges to the tow truck operator or towing business having custody of the removed vehicle. Upon regaining possession of a vehicle, the owner or person entitled to the possession of the vehicle shall not allow or engage in further violations of this Ordinance. In an addition, there shall be a vehicle redemption fee, which shall be set by the Board of Commissioners.

**Section 12 – Sale and Disposition of Unclaimed Vehicle:**

Any abandoned, nuisance or junked motor vehicle which is not claimed by the owner or other party entitled to possession will be disposed of by the County or tow truck operator or towing business having custody of the vehicle. Disposition of such vehicle shall be carried out in coordination with the County and in accordance with Article 1 of Chapter 44A of the North Carolina General Statutes.

**Section 13 – Protection against Criminal or Civil Liability:**

No person shall be held to answer in any civil or criminal action to any owner or other person legally entitled to the possession of an abandoned, nuisance or junked motor vehicle, for disposing of such vehicle as provided in this Ordinance.

**Section 14 – Exception:**

Nothing in this Ordinance shall apply to any vehicle:

- (1) Which is located in a bona fide "automobile graveyard" or "junkyard" as defined in N. C. G. S. 136-143, in accordance with the "Junkyard Control Act," in N. C. G. S. 136-141, et seq.;
- (2) Which is in an enclosed building;
- (3) Which is on the premises of a business enterprise being operated in a lawful place and manner if the vehicle is necessary to the operation of the enterprise; or

- (4) Which is in an appropriate storage place or depository maintained in a lawful place and manner by the County.

**Section 15 – Unlawful Removal of Impounded Vehicle:**

It shall be unlawful for any person to remove or attempt to remove from any storage facility designated by Wayne County any vehicle which has been impounded pursuant to the provisions of this Ordinance unless and until all towing and impoundment fees which are due, or bond in lieu of such fees, have been paid.

**Section 16: Protection against Criminal or Civil Liability:**

No person nor Wayne County may be held to answer in a civil or criminal action to any owner or the person legally entitled to possession of an abandoned, junked, lost or stolen motor vehicle for removing and/or disposing of the vehicle as provided in this Ordinance.

This Ordinance shall be effective upon its adoption provided however, that anyone who has a junked vehicle on his property may have six months from the date of adoption to build an enclosure or secure a cover as allowed in Section 6(d) herein.

Adopted by Wayne County Board of Commissioners July 2, 2002.