

# **LEON COUNTY**

## **CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD AND NUISANCE ABATEMENT BOARD HANDBOOK**



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**PART ONE**  
**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**I. PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK**

This Handbook sets out the rules of procedure for the Leon County Code Enforcement Board ("CEB") and the Nuisance Abatement Board ("NAB") and provides other useful information for the Board members, staff and citizens of Leon County. This Handbook is to be interpreted as implementing the Leon County Code of Laws ("LCC") and nothing herein overrides any provision of the LCC.

**II. GLOSSARY**

As used in this Handbook, the words and abbreviations set out below have the following meaning:

Alleged Violator	The individual or individuals charged with a violation of the Leon County Code of Laws
Board	In Part Two, "Board" means the Code Enforcement Board; in Part Three, "Board" means the Nuisance Abatement Board
CMT	See Communications Media Technology below
CEB	Code Enforcement Board
Code	Unless the context implies otherwise, LCC. See LCC below.
Communications Media Technology	An electronic communication method that includes both video and audio capability (Zoom, or other comparable electronic medium)
Days	For purposes of computing time, "days" means calendar days unless noted otherwise
F.S.	Florida Statutes
NAB	Nuisance Abatement Board
LCC	Leon County Code of Laws, including the Charter, County ordinances and any codes adopted by reference therein
Respondent	The Alleged Violator or Violator, as the context requires
Violator	A person or entity found to be in violation of the LCC
Subject Property	The property on which a violation of the LCC has occurred

**PART TWO**  
**THE LEON COUNTY CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD**

**I. STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

The Local Government Code Enforcement Board Act ("Act") is found at Sections 162.01-162.13, Florida Statutes. The Act authorizes creation of administrative/quasi-judicial boards which may be given authority to impose administrative fines and other non-criminal penalties where a violation of a code provision has occurred, with the goal of obtaining code compliance. The purpose of such boards is to provide an equitable, expeditious, effective and inexpensive method for enforcement of local laws. The intent of the Act as a whole is to promote, protect and improve the health, safety and general welfare of the public.

**II. THE LEON COUNTY CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD**

Pursuant to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, the Board of County Commissioners of Leon County has enacted a local ordinance establishing the CEB, for the purpose of conducting hearings and entering orders to enforce County laws listed in Section 6-31, LCC, including Chapters 5 (building code, article II, technical standards and article IV, property maintenance code), 10, 11, and 14, and any provision of the LCC in which the CEB is specifically granted enforcement jurisdiction. See Chapter 6, LCC.

**III. CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD OPERATIONS**

**A. OFFICERS AND DUTIES**

1. The officers shall be a Chair and a Vice-Chair, both of whom shall be members of the CEB. The County shall provide a staff administrator to the CEB ("CEB Administrator"), who shall also serve as the Clerk of the CEB.

2. The Chair shall preside at all meetings and hearings of the CEB, and shall have all duties normally conferred by parliamentary procedures upon such an officer.

3. The Vice-Chair shall preside at all meetings and hearings at which the Chair is absent, and shall preside in such instances as the Chair announces intention to abstain from voting on any particular matter.

4. In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, the most senior member of the CEB shall serve as the Chair Pro Tem to preside during that meeting/hearing. If there is no most senior member, the CEB Attorney shall call the meeting/hearing to order and announce the absence of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and lack of a most senior member, and shall announce that the CEB should immediately elect a

Chair Pro Tem to preside during that meeting/hearing. The Chair Pro Tem's service shall be terminated by the entrance of the Chair or Vice-Chair, or by the election of another Chair Pro Tem. The Chair Pro Tem (or Vice-Chair, as applicable) shall fulfill all duties of the Chair, to include signing of the orders and minutes related to service as acting Chair.

5. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall have the privilege at the public hearing of discussing all matters before the CEB, and shall have the same voting rights as each other CEB member.

#### B. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. Nomination of officers shall be made from the floor at the annual organizational meeting in September of each year, and the election shall be held immediately thereafter.

2. A candidate receiving a majority vote shall be elected and shall serve a term of one year or until a successor shall take office.

3. Any vacancy in office shall be filled immediately by regular election procedure at any meeting of the CEB. The elected candidate shall serve the remainder of the original one year term which has been vacated.

#### C. MEETINGS

##### 1. Regular Meetings

Regular meetings shall be held according to the schedule approved by the CEB, on the third Thursday of the scheduled month at 1:00 p.m. EST at a location as designated in advance by the CEB Administrator. The CEB may set meetings more frequently, if necessary.

##### 2. Special Meetings

The CEB Administrator may call a special meeting of the CEB.

##### 3. Notice

Notice of all meetings, regular and special, shall be given to all CEB members at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance of the meeting.

##### 4. Attendance

(a) Members shall notify the CEB Administrator, if they cannot attend a meeting.

(b) Any member of the CEB who fails to attend two out of three successive meetings during any calendar year shall automatically forfeit such appointment and the Board of County Commissioners shall promptly fill such vacancy. Members may also be removed for cause by the Board of County Commissioners.

(c) Upon the determination of a majority of the members present in the meeting room and voting, that extraordinary circumstances exist to justify the physical absence of a member or members from said meeting, and assuming a quorum of the CEB is otherwise physically present as

provided in Section III. C. 5, the CEB may, by motion made and approved, allow the participation of the physically absent member or members by communications media technology ("CMT") that includes both video and audio communication (Zoom, or other comparable electronic medium). In such case, the CMT must be configured so that interactive access by members of the public is available to see and hear the physically absent member or members. The decision of the CEB shall either be made at the immediately preceding meeting of the CEB or at the beginning of the meeting where participation by CMT is anticipated to be used and shall be based upon the facts and circumstances of each request. The physically absent member or members may not vote on any motion authorizing such participation. A physically absent member must take all steps necessary to provide the interactive communication between the meeting location and the member's location.

5. Quorum

A quorum of the CEB shall consist of four voting members. An affirmative vote of a majority of those present and voting shall be necessary to pass any motion or adopt any order, provided, however, that at least three members of the CEB must vote in favor of any action in order for the action to be official.

6. Voting

Voting shall be by voice vote, and shall be recorded by individual "aye" for those in favor and "nay" for those opposed.

7. Abstention

Each member present shall cast a vote on each question before the CEB, except that if any member has a conflict pursuant to Chapter 112, Florida Statutes, the member shall abstain from voting on that matter and must file a Memorandum of Voting Conflict with the CEB Administrator as prescribed by Chapter 112, Florida Statutes.

8. Conduct of Business

Parliamentary procedures in CEB meetings/hearings shall be guided by Roberts' Rules of Order and by the procedures set forth in this Handbook. The CEB Attorney serves as the parliamentarian.

9. Order of Business

- (a) Call to Order
- (b) Roll Call
- (c) Minutes of Previous Meetings
- (d) Unfinished Business
- (e) Continuances
- (f) Compliance/Dismissals

(g) Public Hearings

- (1) Swearing of Witnesses
- (2) Prosecution's Case-in-chief
- (3) Alleged Violator's Defenses
- (4) CEB Discussion
- (5) Entry of Order

(h) Requests for Extensions of Time for Compliance for Legitimate Reasons: These requests must be submitted in writing, explaining reasons and hardships, prior to the ordered date for compliance and at least two weeks prior to any scheduled public hearing. A Respondent seeking an extension must appear at the hearing to present the basis for the extension.

(i) Requests for Reduction and/or Rescission of Fines for Legitimate Hardship:

These requests must be submitted to the CEB Administrator in writing after compliance has been achieved and at least two weeks before any scheduled public hearing, explaining what hardships the Respondent has endured in attempting to comply.

(j) Requests to Address the CEB

(k) Old Business

(l) New Business Other Than Public Hearings

(m) Informational Items

(n) Adjournment

The order of business may be altered or suspended by a vote of the majority of those members present.

#### **IV. THE PROCESS LEADING UP TO THE PUBLIC HEARING**

##### **A. DISCOVERY OF VIOLATION**

Enforcement proceedings must be initiated by a Code Inspector. Violations are usually discovered as a result of: (1) a citizen complaint; (2) routine inspection of an area; (3) annual maintenance inspection of premises; or (4) a Code Inspector noticing a violation while engaged in inspection of some other site. CEB members have no power to initiate CEB proceedings. However, CEB members retain their prerogative as citizens of the County to contact the Code Compliance Services Division and lodge any complaint(s) they may have as to possible LCC violations of which they may become aware. It would then be the Code Inspector's duty to investigate the matter and institute proceedings as necessary where a violation is found to exist.

A Code Inspector may not initiate enforcement proceedings for a potential violation of the LCC by way of an anonymous complaint. Persons who reports a potential violation of the LCC must provide their names and addresses (and preferred method of contact) to the Code Compliance Services Division before an enforcement proceeding may occur. This paragraph does not apply if the Code Inspector has reason to believe that the violation presents an imminent threat to public health, safety, or welfare or imminent destruction of habitat or sensitive resources. In the event a Code Inspector receives an anonymous complaint, the Code Inspector will document the information provided for the record.

In order to constitute an "imminent threat" to public health, safety or welfare, the violation must be alarming in nature and the Code Inspector must be able to articulate facts as to why the Code Inspector has reason to believe there is an imminent threat to public health, safety or welfare. By way of example and without limitation, a complaint of a dilapidated structure which is at risk of collapse and presents a significant fire hazard would constitute articulable facts showing that the Code Inspector has reason to believe there is an imminent threat to public health, safety or welfare.

#### B. NOTICE OF VIOLATION

The next step is determination of ownership of the site in violation. This is necessary in order to provide a notice ("Notice of Violation") to the owners of the property, as well as any other persons responsible for the violation. The Notice of Violation is mailed to the Alleged Violator via certified mail, return receipt requested or hand delivered as provided in the LCC and will include a demand that the violation be corrected within a reasonable time, unless the violation is a repeat violation, in which case the Code Inspector may demand that the violation be immediately corrected and a hearing scheduled as soon as practicable before the CEB. Where the Code Inspector has reason to believe the violation presents a serious threat to the public, or if the violation is irreparable or irreversible in nature, the Code Inspector need make only a reasonable effort to notify the owner(s) and may immediately request a hearing before the CEB. In order to place the Alleged Violator, also referred to herein as the "Respondent," on notice of future consequences of continued non-compliance, the following text will appear in each Notice of Violation:

We ask that you make every effort to comply within this time frame. Should the violation continue beyond the time specified for the correction in this Notice of Violation, the Code Inspector shall notify the Code Enforcement Board ("Board"). A hearing will be scheduled before the Board even if the violation has been corrected prior to the Board hearing. If the Board finds a violation occurred, a fine may be imposed for up to \$250 per day for a first violation or up to \$500 per day for a repeat violation. This fine shall constitute a lien against the land on which the violation exists.

C. CODE INSPECTOR'S REQUEST FOR CODE COMPLIANCE HEARING

If the owner or Alleged Violator fails to correct a violation within the time specified in the Notice of Violation, if the violation is a repeat violation, or if the violation is a threat to public health, safety, or welfare or is irreparable/irreversible (as discussed above), the Code Inspector will request a Code Compliance Hearing by filing a copy of the Notice of Violation and a Request for Code Compliance Hearing and Affidavit of Violation with the CEB Administrator. The Code Inspector's filing, which will be in the form of an affidavit, should specifically identify each Code section that is allegedly being violated by activities or circumstances on the particular site, and should indicate "repeat violation" where such is the basis for the hearing request.

D. INITIATION OF ACTIONS BEFORE THE CEB

All actions before the CEB in connection with a Code Compliance Hearing shall be initiated by the CEB Administrator, upon a Code Inspector's filing a Request for Code Compliance Hearing and Affidavit of Violation as provided in Section C above. The CEB Administrator shall set the case for a Code Compliance Hearing.

E. NOTICE OF CODE COMPLIANCE HEARING; PARTICIPATION BY CMT; EXTENSION OF TIME

1. Service of Notice of Code Compliance Hearing

Once a date for hearing is scheduled, the CEB Administrator shall send a Notice of Code Compliance Hearing to the Alleged Violator, who will be referred to in the Notice of Code Compliance Hearing as the "Respondent," and to the property owners(s), if different, by certified mail, return receipt requested, or hand delivery, as provided in the LCC. A copy of the Code Inspector's Request for Code Compliance Hearing and Affidavit of Violation, and a copy of the meeting agenda (when available), are also sent to the Alleged Violator with the Notice of Code Compliance Hearing. A copy of the Notice of Code Compliance Hearing shall also be provided to the County's prosecuting attorney, the Code Compliance Supervisor and the Code Inspectors involved.

The Notice of Code Compliance Hearing will provide the Alleged Violator and property owner(s), if different, the option to appear at the evidentiary hearing either in person or by CMT. To qualify for participation with CMT, the participants must provide at their own expense an electronic communication method that includes both video and audio capability (Zoom, or other comparable electronic medium). The Notice of Code Compliance Hearing will include the steps to be taken to participate by CMT described in Section 2 below. CMT participation is not available for court reporters.

2. Participation by Communications Media Technology

To appear by CMT, the Alleged Violator and property owner(s), if different, must request a

meeting link from the Development Support and Environmental Management Office at least ten days before the scheduled hearing. The Alleged Violator must ensure that both video and audio capabilities exist adequate to be clearly heard and seen by the CEB. The link will be emailed to the Alleged Violator and property owner(s), if different, seven days before the hearing. If an Alleged Violator or property owner(s), if different, requests a link and the Alleged Violator's CMT does not function during the hearing so as to permit the Alleged Violator or property owner(s), if different, to be seen and heard, the case will be continued to the next Code Compliance Hearing and the Alleged Violator and property owner(s), if different, will need to attend in person to be heard. Court reporters must appear in person.

### 3. Extension of Time

After the Alleged Violator/owner receives Notice of Code Compliance Hearing, the Alleged Violator/owner may make an effort to remedy the violation or may request more time to do so. The CEB Administrator, the County Attorney's office, and the Code Inspectors are always willing to work with Alleged Violators/owners towards resolving the violation(s) prior to the Code Compliance Hearing. Where an Alleged Violator/owner has contacted the CEB Administrator or the Code Inspector after receiving the Notice of Code Compliance Hearing, and has indicated a sincere willingness to remedy the violation, the CEB Administrator may recommend that the Code Compliance Hearing be continued to allow additional time for negotiation, remedial effort, and possible resolution of the violation. Where the CEB approves such a request for continuance, a notice to that effect will be sent to the Alleged Violator and the property owner, if different. Where the violation is corrected prior to the Code Compliance Hearing and is not a repeat violation, the CEB Administrator may recommend that the CEB close the case.

The authority for these actions is found in Leon County Code of Laws Sec. 6-30. - Enforcement procedure, which reads as follows:

If a repeat violation is found, the code inspector shall notify the violator but is not required to give the violator a reasonable time to correct the violation. The code inspector, upon notifying the violator of a repeat violation, shall notify the code enforcement board and request a hearing. The code enforcement board, through its clerical staff, shall schedule a hearing and shall provide notice pursuant to [Section 6-36](#). The case may be presented to the code enforcement board even if the repeat violation has been corrected prior to the code enforcement board hearing, and the notice shall so state.

## F. STAFF PREPARATION FOR CODE COMPLIANCE HEARING

### 1. Agenda Packets

The CEB Administrator is responsible for preparing the agenda for each Code Compliance

Hearing. The Code Inspectors and the Code Compliance Supervisor review the cases, and prepare staff reports, including staff recommendations for each case, which are submitted to the CEB Administrator for inclusion in the CEB "agenda packet" for each meeting. Agenda packets usually include the agenda, minutes of prior meeting for review by the CEB, a site map, a Staff Report and any other documentary evidence and correspondence available relating to each case to be heard, status reports on compliance with orders entered at prior hearings, and informational copies of Orders entered at the preceding meeting. An agenda packet is customarily sent to each CEB member for review at least forty-eight hours prior to the meeting date.

The staff recommendation will include a request that the Code Compliance Order include a notice that the Order must be complied with by a specified date, and that a fine may will be imposed if the Order is not complied with by such date, specifying how the fine will be calculated, and that a lien will be imposed on the property. If the violation was corrected after scheduling of the Code Compliance Hearing but before such hearing, the staff recommendation may include a request that the CEB enter a Code Compliance Order finding that the violation occurred and has been resolved, and order closing of the file. The staff recommendation will also include text addressing the requirements of Section VII. B.

2. Photographs; Videotapes; or Other Illustrative Evidence

The Code Inspector for each case will generally have visited the site one to two weeks before the Code Compliance Hearing for purposes of preparing photographic or videotaped evidence of the alleged violation to be presented before the CEB. Drawings and file records are also pulled and highlighted to specify the alleged violations. The Respondent may present additional photos, videotapes or other illustrative evidence. County evidence will be admitted into the record of the proceedings as County Composite Exhibit 1. The Respondent's evidence provided to the CEB will be entered into the record as Respondent's Exhibit 1 or Respondent's Composite Exhibit 1, as applicable. The Respondent will be notified at the time the Notice of Hearing is provided that any evidence (documents, photos, videotapes or other illustrative evidence) to be presented by Respondent at the Code Compliance Hearing must be filed with the CEB Administrator no less than seven days before the Code Compliance Hearing.

G. SUBPOENAS

The CEB is empowered to issue subpoenas, as requested by the Code Inspector or the Respondent, or upon its own initiative. The following protocol shall be followed:

1. Request for Subpoena

Requests for subpoena(s) by any party shall be made not later than fourteen days prior to the Code Compliance Hearing. Consideration of a request for subpoena shall come before the CEB at the

next scheduled public hearing and, if the request for subpoena(s) is granted, the evidentiary hearing for the case will be continued to the following meeting of the CEB. Without objection, the CEB will issue the subpoena.

2. Objection to Issuance of Subpoena

A party or any individual proposed to be subpoenaed may object to the issuance of a subpoena and present objection to the CEB at the time that the request for subpoena is heard. In such case, the CEB may hear evidence and argument as to the necessity of the evidence to be adduced from the person who would be subpoenaed. The CEB will reject issuance of a subpoena if the evidence presented indicates that the individual does not have information germane to the case, the evidence sought will be provided by other witnesses, the subpoena is being requested purely for harassment, or for other good cause. Failure of a person subpoenaed to object prior to the issuance of a subpoena shall not preclude the subpoenaed person from filing a motion to quash a subpoena.

3. Service of a Subpoena

The subpoena will be executed by the Chair of the CEB in the form provided in Attachment 3. The party who requested the subpoena(s) shall send the subpoena to the Leon County Sheriff's Department or other process service approved by the CEB within five days of issuance and shall be responsible for directly paying any costs and charges incurred in the service of process. It is the responsibility of each party to secure attendance by its witnesses at the evidentiary hearing.

Proof of service of a subpoena shall be provided to the CEB Administrator not later than two working days prior to the hearing. If proof of service is not provided or the person subpoenaed does not appear and the party requesting the subpoena does not excuse the witness from testifying, the CEB may continue the hearing to allow the party to seek enforcement of the subpoena as provided below.

The failure of a subpoenaed witness to appear at the hearing is not grounds to invalidate the ultimate CEB action, provided that the party is otherwise afforded due process. Subject to the foregoing, if a witness fails to appear, a party may seek enforcement of a subpoena by filing a petition for enforcement in the circuit court of the judicial circuit in which the person failing to comply with the subpoena resides within twenty days of the failure to appear at hearing. Notice of the filing of the petition must be served on all parties.

## **V. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

The order of presentation shall be as provided in Section VI below. As an option in lieu of appearance in person at the public hearing, Respondents and other members of the public may participate by means of communications media technology. The decision to appear by CMT will be purely at the option of the person seeking to appear using such media. Nothing herein precludes

participation in person at the hearing. Persons appearing via CMT must comply with all the requirements set forth in Section IV. E. 1 and 2. If the CMT of a person using such a medium does not function during the hearing so as to permit the person to be both seen and heard, the case will be continued to the next Code Compliance Hearing and the Respondent or member of the public will need to attend the hearing in person to be heard. Court reporters cannot appear via CMT.

## **VI. FORMAT FOR THE PUBLIC HEARING**

### **A. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR OR STAFF**

The Chair or designated staff shall open each meeting by providing an introduction in basically the following form:

Welcome to this meeting of the Code Enforcement Board of Leon County. The purpose of this meeting is to provide a hearing as to allegations of Code violations which have been filed by Leon County.

The Code Enforcement Board was established to obtain compliance with County Code provisions. The Board has no authority to change the ordinances; that can only be done by the Board of County Commissioners. The Code Enforcement Board is empowered to determine whether a violation has occurred or has been repeated, to order actions as it deems reasonably necessary to bring about compliance with the Code, to levy a fine if compliance is not achieved as ordered or if a repeat violation has occurred, and to modify or rescind a fine after compliance is achieved where circumstances warrant. Decisions of the Code Enforcement Board may be appealed to the Circuit Court. They are not appealable to the Board of County Commissioners. Each case will be called by number and by Respondent's name. Any witnesses proposed by the County and those proposed by each Respondent, including the Respondent, will be sworn or will affirm to tell the truth. The County's Prosecuting Attorney may present a brief opening statement, and the Code Inspector will present the County's case. Each Respondent will then have an opportunity to present defenses to the case. Each party may cross-examine the other party's witnesses. At the close of all testimony and evidence on the case, the Board will make a decision and an Order will be entered.

Each person appearing before the Board must present testimony and evidence while observing proper decorum and respect for the proceedings. No use of foul language or threatening words will be permitted. Individuals who fail to observe these requirements will be escorted out of the hearing room.

We will follow the sequence of the printed agenda.

## B. PROCEDURES FOR EACH CASE

### 1. Introduction of the Case

The Chair will read the case number and name of the Respondent and ask if the Respondent or a representative of the Respondent is present and wishes to contest the charges, to testify or to call witnesses. If so, the CEB will proceed to hear that case after swearing in all anticipated witnesses. Alternatively, instead of *en masse* swearing in, particularly but not exclusively in case of CMT participation, individual witnesses may be sworn or affirm to tell the truth one by one as they come up to testify.

### 2. County Presentation

The County will present its case:

- (a) A brief opening argument, summarizing the nature of the alleged violations may be presented.
- (b) Testimony, evidence, and pictures, as available, are presented.
- (c) The Respondent is allowed to ask questions of the County's witnesses at the conclusion of the witness' testimony.
- (d) The CEB members may ask questions.
- (e) The County presents its staff recommendation to the CEB.

### 3. Respondent's Presentation

The Respondent may present his/her defense(s) or plea for time:

- (a) A brief opening argument, summarizing the Respondent's position, may be presented by Respondent or counsel.
- (b) Testimony, evidence, and pictures, as available, are presented by the Respondent.
- (c) The County may ask questions of the Respondent and any witnesses providing testimony on Respondent's behalf.
- (d) The CEB may ask questions.
- (e) The Respondent may voice objections or concerns as to the staff's recommended order on the case. The County will be given an opportunity to amend its recommendation if desired.

### 4. Closing Argument

Counsel for each party may present a brief closing argument to the CEB.

### 5. CEB Discussion

The CEB will openly deliberate and discuss the case at the close of all evidence. Each CEB

member should speak clearly into the microphone at all times. (The quasi-judicial hearing being subject to government in the Sunshine Law, the public has a right to hear all discussion ensuing at the presentation of the case).

6. Continuances

The CEB may, in its discretion, at any time during the hearing, continue the hearing to the next meeting date and request further information from either party.

7. Motions

When a CEB member desires to make a motion before the CEB for a finding that the Respondent has committed the alleged violations, that member should address the Chair and make a motion in substantially the following manner:

"Based upon the testimony and evidence presented, I move to find that violations of Sections \_\_\_\_ of the Leon County Code exist on the cited premises, that the Respondent has responsibility for the occurrence or presence of such violations, and that the Respondent has therefore committed the violation(s), allowing \_\_\_\_ days to bring the violation(s) into compliance as recommended by the County, and assessing a fine of \$\_\_ per day for each day thereafter until Respondent brings the property into compliance."

Alternatively, the CEB member may make a motion in this manner:

"I move the staff recommendation."

If the latter option is used, the CEB member may add exceptions by referencing the specific paragraphs of the staff recommendation that the member wishes to amend.

At this stage the Chair should ask for a second to the motion. If there is a second, then the CEB should discuss the motion. The Chair may recognize CEB counsel or the prosecuting attorney if they request to advise the CEB. Once discussion is complete the Chair should call for a vote on the motion.

If no member takes the initiative to make a motion, the Chair may suggest that "the Chair will entertain a motion." Failing a response, the Chair may request that the County repeat its recommendation, which may serve as a model for a motion. The Chair may also make a motion.

The following motions, in addition to the previously mentioned motion to find for the County, may serve as models:

(a) TO FIND FOR THE RESPONDENT

"Based upon the testimony and evidence presented, I move to find the Respondent has not committed the violation alleged." Note: Any such motion must be accompanied with corresponding findings of fact supporting the motion.

(b) TO CONTINUE THE CASE

"Based upon the testimony and evidence presented, I move to continue the case until the next public hearing of the Board."

(c) TO FIND A REPEAT VIOLATOR

"Based upon the testimony and evidence presented, I move to find the Respondent is a repeat violator of \_\_\_\_\_ of the Leon County Code of Laws, and to assess a fine of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per day for each day the repeat violation has been shown to have continued beyond \_\_\_\_\_, the date the repeat violation is found to have occurred by the Code Inspector, through such date as Respondent has brought the property into compliance."

(d) TO DISMISS FOR COMPLIANCE

"Based upon the representation by the County and the Respondent that a violation has occurred but has been corrected prior to this hearing in a manner consistent with the Leon County Code of Laws, I move to dismiss this case for compliance."

(e) TO EXTEND TIME FOR COMPLIANCE

"Based upon the testimony and evidence presented, I move to find that the Respondent has shown reasonable and sufficient hardship requiring an extension of time within which to comply with the previous Order of this Board as entered on (date), and that the Board therefore grant Respondent an extension of time for compliance to the date of \_\_\_\_\_, after which the daily fine as set forth in the previous Order will be imposed for each day until the violation has been brought into compliance. The date expressed in this motion shall replace the due date listed in the prior Order of the Board."

(f) TO REDUCE FINE

"Based upon the evidence and testimony presented, I move to find that the Respondent has complied with this Board's Order of (date), as of (date), that Respondent has made a sufficient showing of reasonable effort to comply and sincere hardship endured in attempting to comply, and therefore that this Board reduce the accrued fine amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to \$\_\_\_\_\_, provided that such reduced sum be paid within \_\_\_\_\_ days of the date of this order. If not paid within \_\_\_\_\_ days of this Order as above mentioned, the fine amount shall revert to the sum otherwise due."

(g) TO RESCIND FINE

"Based upon the evidence and testimony presented, I move to find that Respondent has

complied with this Board's Order of (date) as of (date), that Respondent has shown reasonable and good faith effort to comply and sufficient hardship endured in attempting to comply, and therefore that this Board rescind the accrued fine and lien of \$\_\_\_\_\_ in this case and file a satisfaction of lien in the public records."

## **VII. CODE COMPLIANCE ORDER; APPEALS**

### **A. ORAL DECISION**

The Violator is informed of the CEB's decision at the conclusion of the case, if present at the hearing, which will be followed up with a written order.

### **B. WRITTEN ORDER**

1. After the hearing, the CEB Administrator prepares a Code Compliance Order on each case where a violation is found including findings of fact, based on evidence of record, and conclusions of law. The Code Compliance Order shall require compliance and afford the proper relief consistent with powers granted to the CEB. The Code Compliance Order will include a notice that it must be complied with by a specified date, and that a fine will be imposed if the Code Compliance Order is not complied with by such date, specifying how the fine will be calculated, and that a lien will be imposed on the property. If the violation was corrected after scheduling of the Code Compliance Hearing but before such hearing, the CEB may enter a Code Compliance Order finding that the violation occurred and has been resolved, and order closing of the file. The CEB shall provide the Code Compliance Order by certified mail to the Respondent. The Code Compliance Order will be signed by the CEB Chair or another CEB member acting as Chair and will be attested to and rendered by the Clerk of the CEB. A certified copy of the Code Compliance Order may be recorded in the public records of Leon County and if the violation concerns real property, terms therein shall be binding upon the violator and, if the violation concerns real property, any subsequent purchasers, successors in interest, or assigns.. The CEB may at the time of the Code Compliance Hearing authorize the chair to enter the order imposing fine and lien in the event the violator fails to comply with any one or more of the requirements set forth in the Code Compliance Order.

2. All Code Compliance Orders will include this text:

If Respondent fails to comply with any one or more of the requirements set forth in paragraphs \_\_\_ above by the corresponding compliance deadline date set forth in said paragraphs, the County will give notice to Respondent that: Respondent has failed to comply with this Order and will be subject to penalties in the sum of: *[for junk and mowing code violations, \$100 for the first day and \$35 per day thereafter that the Respondent is out of compliance with this*

*Order; for all others, including repeat violations, \$250 per day that the Respondent is out of compliance with this Order]; and a lien will be imposed on the Subject Property. Respondent shall have twenty days from the date of the notice to file a Request for a Compliance Review Hearing with the CEB Administrator, to challenge the determination of non-compliance with this Order, validity of the fine amount, or the imposition of a lien. Failure to timely file a Request for a Compliance Review Hearing will be deemed a waiver of the right to challenge the determination of non-compliance with this Order, validity of the fine amount, and the imposition of a lien.*

If Respondent fails to timely file a Request for a Compliance Review Hearing, the County will submit an Affidavit of Non-compliance to the Chair of the Code Enforcement Board. Upon receipt of the Affidavit of Non-compliance, and confirmation that Respondent has waived the right to request a hearing, the Chair is hereby authorized to execute an Order Imposing Fine, which will be filed against Respondent immediately and a fine shall be assessed in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for the first day and \$\_\_\_\_ for each day thereafter that the violation persists beyond the ordered compliance deadline date. *[For junk code and mowing, add: Such fine shall cease accruing when the amount reaches \$10,000.00].* The fine established by the Order Imposing Fine shall constitute a lien against the Subject Property.

Respondent has been found to be in violation of Section \_\_\_\_\_, LCC. If at any time within the next five years, Respondent is found by the Board to have violated the same provisions of the LCC cited in this Order, either at the Subject Property or at any other location, any such new violation will be treated as a repeat violation. In accordance with Section 6-34, LCC, if the Board finds that a repeat violation has occurred, Respondent will be subject to a fine of up to \$500.00 per day to run from the date the repeat violation is found to have occurred by the Code Inspector until it is resolved. If the Board finds the violation to be irreparable or irreversible in nature, it may impose a one-time fine not to exceed \$5,000.00 per violation.

#### C. APPEALS

1. An aggrieved party and/or the County may appeal a final administrative order of the CEB to the circuit court. An appeal shall be filed within thirty days of the date of rendering of the order to be appealed. As used in this Section, the term "aggrieved party" means a person who possesses a present legal right of present or future enjoyment of the property by virtue of a deed, title, mortgage, fully executed contract for purchase, lien on estate in the property, judgment of court, being named a beneficiary in a will or trust of a deceased owner or the legal spouse of the property owner.

2. Pursuant to Florida Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.190(e)(3), a party seeking to stay an order of the CEB while an appeal is pending must file a motion requesting such stay with the CEB, which shall have continuing jurisdiction, in its discretion, to grant, modify, or deny such relief. A stay pending review may be conditioned on the posting of a good and sufficient bond, other conditions, or both. In determining whether a stay should be granted the CEB may consider whether the violation presents an imminent peril to the public health or general welfare or presents immediate danger to the life or safety of any person.

### **VIII. POST-HEARING EXTENSION OF TIME**

A Respondent who makes a good faith effort to achieve compliance but who encounters difficulties beyond the Respondent's control may contact the CEB through its Administrator prior to the ordered compliance date, and at least one week prior to any scheduled public hearing, to request an extension of time for compliance. The CEB will give due consideration to the request at its public hearing, and a notice of its action on the request will be provided thereafter to the Respondent. If the extension of time is granted, the new date will replace the compliance date listed in the order.

### **IX. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT OF ORDERS**

#### **A. TIME FOR COMPLIANCE**

1. Unless specified otherwise in the Code Compliance Order, the time for compliance begins to run from the date the written order is entered by the CEB. It is the Respondent's responsibility to contact the Code Inspector to request a compliance inspection immediately upon the violation having been corrected in order to avoid accumulation of the fine imposed.

2. After a Code Compliance Order has been issued by the CEB with a scheduled date for compliance, the Code Inspector shall make a compliance inspection to determine if the violation has been corrected as required. Whenever possible, such inspection shall occur within seven days of the date of request for compliance inspection by the violator, or, when no such request is made by the violator, within ten days after the ordered date for compliance.

3. The Code Inspector shall issue an Affidavit of Compliance or Non-Compliance, as appropriate, after completing a compliance inspection as specified above.

#### **B. PROCEDURES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE**

1. If the violator fails to comply with any one or more of the requirements set forth in the Code Compliance Order by the corresponding compliance deadline, the County will send notice by certified mail to the violator advising that the violator has failed to comply with Code Compliance Order and will be subject to penalties in the form of a fine per day for each day that the violator remains out of compliance with the Code Compliance Order, and that a lien as determined will be imposed on

the property.

2. The violator shall have twenty days from the date of the notice of non-compliance to file a request for a Compliance Review Hearing before the CEB to challenge the determination of non-compliance with the Code Compliance Order, validity of the fine amount, or the imposition of the lien.

3. Such request for a Compliance Review Hearing shall be filed with the CEB Administrator, who will notice the case for a Compliance Review Hearing. Failure to timely file a request for a Compliance Review Hearing will be deemed a waiver of the right to challenge the determination of non-compliance with the Code Compliance Order, validity of the fine amount, or the imposition of a lien.

4. If the violator fails to timely file a request for Code Compliance Hearing, the County will submit an affidavit of non-compliance to the Chair of the CEB. Upon receipt of the affidavit of non-compliance, and confirmation that the violator waived the right to request a Code Compliance Hearing to contest non-compliance, validity of the fine amount, or the imposition of a lien, the Chair may execute an Order Imposing Fine, which will be filed against the violator immediately and a fine shall be assessed for the days the violator is out of compliance. The fines established by the Order Imposing Fine shall constitute a lien against the property. The County shall record the lien.

5. The procedures set forth in Sections V. and VI. for conduct of a Code Compliance Hearing shall be followed for the Compliance Review Hearing, unless a different procedure is provided for in Section IX. Subpoenas may be issued as provided in Section IV. G.

6. The Compliance Review Hearing will not entertain a review of facts found in the Code Compliance Order but will be limited to whether: the Respondent is in compliance with the Code Compliance Order; the fine amount is valid; or the lien is properly imposed.

7. Approximately three months after filing of a lien, the existence of the First Notice of Possible Foreclosure Action Letter should be brought to the CEB's attention by the CEB Administrator. All existing liens should be brought to the CEB's attention during the review and approval of the CEB's Annual Report.

## **X. FINES AND FORECLOSURE**

### **A ACCRUAL OF FINE**

A fine amount continues to accrue each day until either:

1. the Violator notifies the Code Inspector, and the Code Inspector verifies that the violation has been corrected; or
2. a judgment is rendered in a suit to foreclose the lien imposed by the CEB order.

### **B. FORECLOSURE**

1. The County Attorney's Office may be directed by the CEB to file suit to foreclose an unpaid lien on property at any time after three months, but within twenty years, of the time the lien is filed. Issues such as the amount of the lien, homestead exemption, existing mortgages, and existence of other liens are taken into consideration in determining whether to pursue foreclosure.

2. When a lien on a non-homestead property has been filed for more than three months, the CEB Administrator will bring the case to the CEB and request permission to send a letter advising the Respondent(s) that the property has not been found in compliance (including failure to pay a fine), that it has been more than three months since the lien was filed, and that the CEB has the authority to authorize the County Attorney's Office to start foreclosure procedures. This letter will include a deadline date for the Respondent(s) to contact the CEB Administrator for a compliance inspection. If the Respondent(s) does not contact the CEB Administrator by the deadline date, the CEB Administrator will schedule a date for the CEB to consider foreclosure of the lien and will send a letter to the Respondent(s) informing them of the date the CEB will consider beginning foreclosure proceedings. After the CEB considers whether to begin foreclosure proceedings and the CEB recommends foreclosure of the lien, the County Attorney's Office will be authorized to begin foreclosure procedures.

## **XI. MISCELLANEOUS**

### **A. AMENDMENTS TO HANDBOOK; OPEN MEETINGS; AND PUBLIC RECORDS**

#### **1. Amendments**

The Handbook may be amended in any manner not inconsistent with the County Code during a regular meeting by the affirmative vote of a majority of at least four members of the CEB, provided that notice of the proposed change is given to the CEB at a preceding regular meeting.

#### **2. Open Meetings**

All meetings and all hearings shall be open to the public, in accordance with the provisions of Florida's "Sunshine Law," Chapter 286, Florida Statutes.

#### **3. Public Records**

All records of the CEB shall be open to public examination and copying, in accordance with the provisions of the Florida "Public Records Law," Chapter 119, Florida Statutes.

### **B. EMERGENCY CONDITIONS**

In the event of an emergency condition that has been acknowledged by emergency order entered pursuant to law by the Governor or Board of County Commissioners, the CEB may alter the procedures set forth herein consistent with the terms of such emergency order and direction by the Board of County Commissioners.

## **XII. ATTORNEY GENERAL GUIDANCE**

Attorney General Opinions with information pertaining to the workings of code enforcement boards around the State are provided for informational purposes only in Appendix 1. Not all the information provided may apply to individual code enforcement boards or may be superseded by subsequent legislation. The CEB should seek assistance from Board Counsel prior to interpreting any such Opinion as being applicable to the CEB.

## **XIII. GUIDE TO THE SUNSHINE AMENDMENT AND CODE OF ETHICS**

A copy of the Ethics and the Sunshine Laws, published by the Florida Commission on Ethics, will be provided to each CEB member. As to government ethics and disclosure in particular, a provision for CEB members to note is Section 112.3143, Florida Statutes, which relates to voting conflicts. Provisions of that Section apply to CEB members, as appointees to a governmental quasi-judicial body, with regard to conflicts and their effect on a member's ability or choice to vote in particular cases. Information can also be found here: <http://cms.leoncountyfl.gov/committees/Training.asp>

County boards are also governed by the Leon County Code of Ethics found in Article XII, LCC. Every CEB member should review the Leon County Code of Ethics and become familiar with it for day to day operations of the CEB.

## **XIV. FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE FORM**

All members of the CEB are required to complete a yearly financial disclosure form provided by the Commission on Ethics. The filing deadline for the form is July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

If a member leaves prior to or after the member's term expires, a Final Statement of Financial Interests form, Form 1F, must be filed within sixty days after leaving.

Further information is available on the [Commission on Ethics](https://www.ethics.state.fl.us/) website: <https://www.ethics.state.fl.us/>

## **PART THREE**

### **LEON COUNTY NUISANCE ABATEMENT BOARD**

#### **I. PURPOSE OF THE NUISANCE ABATEMENT BOARD AND PROCESS**

The purpose of the NAB and of the process created to address nuisance abatement in Leon County is to promote, protect, and improve the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the County by creating an administrative board with the authority to determine whether a building or premises presents a serious and continuing danger to the public and/or occupants and enter an order allowing

said nuisance to be abated by the County.

## **II. MEMBERSHIP; OFFICERS; TERM; AND QUORUM**

Members of the CEB serve as the members of the NAB. The terms of office of the members of the NAB coincide with the terms of office of the CEB. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the CEB serve as Chair and Vice-Chair of the NAB, respectively. Four or more members of the NAB physically present at any meeting shall constitute a quorum in order to conduct business.

## **III. PROVISIONS OF THE CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD HANDBOOK ADOPTED BY REFERENCE**

The provisions of the CEB Handbook listed below are adopted by reference for use by the NAB. Any references to the CEB in said rules shall be read to mean the NAB for purposes of this Section. If any conflict exists between the provisions adopted by reference and other portions of this Part Three, Part Three shall prevail.

- III. A. Officers and Duties
- III. C. 4. (c) Participation by Members Via Communications Media Technology
- III. C. 6. Voting
- III. C. 7. Abstention
- III. C. 8. Conduct of Business
- III. C. 9. Order of Business (to the extent applicable)
- IV. E. 1 and 2. Notice of Hearing and Participation by Communications Media Technology
- IV. G. Subpoenas
- XI. Miscellaneous

## **IV. POWERS OF THE NUISANCE ABATEMENT BOARD**

The NAB has the power to: (1) Adopt rules for the conduct of the hearings it holds pursuant to Section 14-52, LCC; (2) Notice and/or subpoena Alleged Violators and witnesses to its hearings; (3) Take testimony under oath; and (4) Issue orders following a hearing, which orders shall have the force of law, including ordering the demolition of a dilapidated structure, the repair of a building to render the building safe, the removal of junk, litter, or junked or abandoned motor vehicles from premises, or the mowing or cutting of overgrowth on premises, should compliance not be achieved within the allotted time.

## **V. FUNCTIONS OF THE NUISANCE ABATEMENT BOARD**

1. The NAB may consider cases that have an order from the CEB finding a violation of Sections 14-21, 14-31, 14-41, or 5-314, LCC, and remain in violation of the CEB's order. Appendix 2 provides a useful summary of the progression of a case from the CEB to the NAB and what happens

afterwards.

2. The County may abate violations of Sections 14-21, 14-31, or 5-314, LCC, if the NAB determines that a building or premises presents a serious and continuing danger to the public and/or occupants. A building or premises presents a serious and continuing danger to the public and/or occupants when it is not safe. Factors evidencing a determination that a property is not safe may include, but are not limited to: unsecured or unsecurable dangerous conditions; a history demonstrating the property owner's failure to exercise reasonable control over the property, to keep it secure or safe; a history showing that the property has become an attractive nuisance to children or transients; a history showing a proliferation of criminal activity due to dilapidated conditions and lack of management and control over the premises; a history showing that notwithstanding the reasonable efforts of code compliance staff and/or the CEB, the property remains in a condition which is dangerous to the public health, safety and welfare.

3. The County may abate violations of Section 14-41, LCC, if the premises upon which the overgrowth exists is determined to be abandoned, and the NAB determines that the prohibited conditions at the premises present a serious and continuing danger to the public as set forth in Section 14-40, LCC. As used herein, the term "abandoned" means any premises that is not lawfully occupied or inhabited as evidenced by non-homestead status; overgrown and/or dead vegetation; nonpayment of taxes; electricity, water, or other utilities turned off or otherwise non-operational; stagnant swimming pool; statements by neighbors, passersby, delivery agents or government agents; or other conditions which would indicate that the property is not lawfully inhabited.

4. The burden is on the County to show by preponderance of the evidence that the building, premises, or overgrowth presents a serious and continuing danger to the public and/or occupants.

## **VI. NOTICE AND HEARING PROCEDURE**

### **A. NOTICE**

If a Code Inspector determines that a building or premises previously found to be in violation of Sections 14-21, 14-31, 14-41, or 5-314, LCC, by the CEB remains in violation and believes it to present a serious and continuing danger to the public and/or occupants of the building, the Code Inspector shall notify the Alleged Violator of the public nuisance and provide a reasonable time to abate the public nuisance. Should the violation continue beyond the reasonable time specified for abatement, the Code Inspector shall notify the NAB and request a hearing. The NAB, through its clerical staff,

shall schedule a hearing, and notice of such hearing shall be as provided in Section 6-36, LCC.

1. Notice of the public nuisance shall be provided to the owner and occupant and shall include:

- (a) A description of the public nuisance and the steps needed to be performed to abate the public nuisance;
- (b) A reasonable time for the Alleged Violator to abate the public nuisance;
- (c) That upon failure to abate the public nuisance as specified in the notice, the case may be referred to the NAB for a hearing;
- (d) That the County may take all necessary steps to abate the public nuisance, including, but not limited to, the demolition of a dilapidated structure or the repair of the building to render it safe, the removal of junk, litter, or junked or abandoned motor vehicles from the premises, or the mowing or cutting of overgrowth at the premises;
- (e) That the cost of any abatement action by the County will be imposed as a lien on the subject property and said lien may be subject to foreclosure.

2. Notice of the NAB hearing shall be provided to the owner and occupant and shall include:

- (a) That the County may take all necessary steps to abate the public nuisance, including, but not limited to, the demolition of a dilapidated structure or the repair of the building to render it safe, the removal of junk, litter, or junked or abandoned motor vehicles, or the mowing or cutting of overgrowth;
- (b) That the NAB has the power to order the property to be vacated;
- (c) That the owner and occupant may participate by communications media technology as provided in Part III of the Nuisance Abatement Handbook.

3. If the County is seeking to demolish the public nuisance, such notice of the NAB hearing shall be served not only upon the property owner of record, but shall also be served upon mortgage holders and lien holders of record.

#### B. HEARING PROCEDURE

1. The NAB Administrator may call NAB hearings. The NAB may, at any hearing, set a future hearing date.

2. The NAB shall convene as often as demand dictates.

3. Minutes shall be kept of all hearings held by the NAB and all such hearings shall be open to the public.

4. Each case before the NAB shall be presented by a representative of the County.

5. The County will provide legal counsel to the NAB, and in no case shall the County Attorney's staff present a case and represent the NAB in the same case. The attorney representing the CEB shall represent the NAB.

6. All cases scheduled for a particular day shall be heard. All testimony shall be under oath and shall be recorded. The NAB shall take testimony from the Code Inspector, the Alleged Violator and any other person familiar with the case and/or property or having knowledge about the case and/or property. The NAB shall not be bound by any formal rules of evidence; however, it shall act to ensure fundamental due process in each case brought before the NAB.

7. At the conclusion of the hearing, the NAB shall issue findings of fact based on evidence of record and conclusions of law, and shall issue an order affording the proper relief consistent with powers granted herein. The finding shall be by motion approved by a majority of those members present and voting, except that at least four members of the seven-member NAB must vote in order for the action to be official. The order shall indicate that it must be complied with by a specified date and, if the order is not complied with by such date, that the nuisance may be abated by the County and a lien may be imposed for the cost of the abatement pursuant to Section 14-54, LCC.

8. A certified copy of such order may be recorded in the public records of the County and shall constitute notice to any subsequent purchasers, successors in interest, or assigns, and the findings therein shall be binding upon the Violator and any subsequent purchasers, successors in interest, or assigns. If an order is recorded in the public records pursuant to this Section and the order is complied with by the date specified in the order, the NAB shall issue an order acknowledging compliance that shall be recorded in the public records. A hearing is not required to issue such an order acknowledging compliance.

9. In the event the owner fails to comply with the time set forth in the order issued by the NAB, the County may take such action as authorized by the NAB. A second hearing is not required if the Code Inspector files an affidavit of non-compliance with the NAB affirming that the order was not complied with by the specified date.

#### C. EXTENSION OF TIME

The NAB may grant an extension of time to comply with the order, if the owner has in good faith begun to comply with the order within the time set forth in the order. A request for an extension of time shall be, in writing, and shall state the reasons the owner has been unable to fully comply. The owner requesting the extension of time must be present at the NAB public hearing considering the

extension. Failure to appear at the NAB hearing may constitute forfeiture of the request for extension of time. Extensions of time shall total no more than one year from the date of the order.

#### D. PROCEDURE FOR VACATING BUILDINGS OR PREMISES; PENALTY

1. Notice to vacate a building or premises declared to be a serious and continuing danger to the public and/or occupants shall be in accordance with Section 6-36, LCC. The property shall be kept posted with the notice to vacate until the property is rendered safe.

2. Any person who fails to abide by the notice to vacate or tampers with the posted notice to vacate shall be punished as provided in Section 1-9, LCC.

#### E. ABATEMENT BY THE COUNTY

The information provided in this Part E is for the information of the NAB. Section 14-54, LCC, provides for abatement by the County as follows:

1. The County and/or agents or contractors hired by the County shall be authorized to enter the subject property for the purpose of inspecting and abating the nuisance.

2. In the event the owner fails to comply with the order issued pursuant to Section 14-51, LCC, within the time fixed therein, the County, through the County Administrator or designee and/or agents or contractors hired by the County Administrator or designee, is authorized to abate the conditions at the expense of the property owner.

3. Upon having the nuisance abated, the County shall mail, by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the owner a notice of the cost of abating the conditions. If payment is not received within 30 days after the mailing of the notice of assessment for the work together with all costs of inspection and administration, the County may file a lien against the property for the actual cost of the work, inspection and administration costs, interest, plus reasonable attorney's fee, and other costs of collecting the sums. Nothing herein shall be construed to prevent the County from exercising its discretion to increase or decrease charges based on cost considerations, or utilizing means other than that contemplated in the notice provided for in Section 14-54, LCC, to abate the conditions violative of Chapter 14, LCC.

4. The lien shall be recorded in the public records and, thereafter, shall constitute a lien against the land on which the public nuisance existed. A lien arising from a fine imposed pursuant to Section 14-54, LCC, runs in favor of the County, and the County may execute a satisfaction or release of lien entered pursuant to this Section. The County Attorney may foreclose on any lien that remains unpaid or to sue to recover a money judgment for the amount of the lien plus accrued interest. No lien created pursuant to the provisions of this Section may be foreclosed on real property which is a homestead under Section 4, Article X of the state constitution. The money judgment provisions of this

Section shall not apply to real property covered under Section 4(a), Article X of the state constitution.

5. Making such repairs or abatement does not create a continuing obligation on the part of the County to make further repairs, abate, or to maintain the property and does not create any liability against the County for any damages to the property if such repairs or abatement were completed in good faith.

#### F. EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

1. If a public nuisance presents imminent peril to the public health or general welfare or immediate danger to the life or safety of any person, unless the public nuisance is immediately rendered safe or demolished, the County Administrator or designee may cause such building to be made safe or demolished, junk, litter, or junked or abandoned motor vehicles to be removed, or overgrowth to be mowed or cut, prior to a hearing before the NAB.

2. For this purpose, the County Administrator or designee and building official may at once enter such building or land to perform an inspection. Upon inspection, the County Administrator or designee and building official shall determine if the building requires immediate demolition or repair in order to maintain the safety and welfare of the owner, occupant, or public. A written report will document the results of the inspection and include photographs documenting the public nuisance when feasible.

3. If the County Administrator or designee determines there is sufficient time prior to demolition or repair action, a notice of intent to demolish or repair will be provided by certified mail, return receipt requested, hand delivery, or telephone to the owner and occupant. The County shall also notify any lien holders. Failure to perfect personal notice upon the owner, occupant, or lien holder shall not prevent the County from performing the emergency demolition, repairs, mowing, or removal and assessing a lien on the property.

4. All costs incurred during the inspection, vacation, securing and emergency demolitions, repairs, or removal are the responsibility of the property owner and shall constitute a lien on the property as set forth in Section 14-54, LCC.

5. The owner, occupant, or other interested parties may request a hearing with the NAB in writing, if the abatement action has not already occurred. The written notice for the request must include the requestor's contact information, including cellular phone number and electronic mail address. The hearing will be scheduled as soon as possible. Notice of the hearing will be mailed to the owner, occupant, and any other interested parties at least five days prior to the hearing.

6. If no notice was sent prior to the abatement of the public nuisance, the NAB shall hear the case within a reasonable period of time. Notice advising of the County's actions and the NAB

hearing shall be sent to the owner and lien holder, if any, of the property pursuant to Section 6-36, LCC.

## **VII. APPEALS**

1. An aggrieved party and/or the County may appeal a final administrative order of the NAB to the circuit court by writ of certiorari. As used in this Section, the term "aggrieved party" means a person who possesses a present legal right of present or future enjoyment of the property by virtue of a deed, title, mortgage, fully executed contract for purchase, lien on estate in the property, judgment of court, being named a beneficiary in a will or trust of a deceased owner or the legal spouse of the property owner.

2. Pursuant to Florida Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.190(e)(3), a party seeking to stay an order of the NAB while an appeal is pending must file a motion requesting such stay with the NAB, which shall have continuing jurisdiction, in its discretion, to grant, modify, or deny such relief. A stay pending review may be conditioned on the posting of a good and sufficient bond, other conditions, or both. In determining whether a stay should be granted the NAB may consider whether the violation presents an imminent peril to the public health or general welfare or presents immediate danger to the life or safety of any person.

## APPENDIX 1

### ATTORNEY GENERAL GUIDANCE

Several Attorney General Opinions have been issued over the years that are of interest to the topic of Code Enforcement. For instance, Attorney General Opinions have provided that the procedures set forth in Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, are the exclusive method for enforcing local codes and ordinances. (AGO 85-17 and AGO 85-84). Section 162.09, Florida Statutes, sets forth the exclusive procedure to be followed for administrative fines and liens. The Section contains no provision for the establishment of a "schedule" of fines for particular offenses.

Section 162.09, Florida Statutes, provides in part:

- (2)(b) in determining the amount of the fine, if any, the enforcement board shall consider the following factors:
1. The gravity of the violation;
  2. Any actions taken by the violator to correct the violation; and
  3. Any previous violations committed by the violator.

The word "shall" has been statutorily interpreted to mean mandatory. Therefore, the three criteria provided in Section 162.09(2), Florida Statutes, are mandatory criteria. There is no discussion of other guidelines or setting a schedule of fines in the statute.

Section 162.08, Florida Statutes, sets forth the powers of code enforcement boards. None of these powers include the establishment of a schedule of fines or guidelines for determining fines. However, this does not mean that fines should be set arbitrarily. The three criteria in Section 162.09, Florida Statutes, do provide some general guidelines to be used on a case by case basis.

Also, the CEB should keep in mind that if cases in their entirety are factually very similar, including the Respondent's own history as to past code violations, then there should be some consistency in the fines applied. A suggestion was made at a November, 1988 CEB workshop that statistics might be developed to show what fines had been applied in the past for particular violations. A review of the Attorney General Opinions [AGO 85-84 (10125/85)] indicates that use of such statistical data is not recommended, because it could be viewed as an inappropriate "schedule" of fines unless all facts of each case are given with the statistics. A summary of Attorney General Opinions relating to various topics of interest follows below.

#### **A. AGO 84-55: IMPOSITION OF FEES AND/OR COSTS**

**QUESTION:** May a local government that has established a local code enforcement board pursuant to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, require that the code enforcement board impose an administrative charge

or fee on individuals, businesses or other entities found to have committed a violation of one or more of the government's technical codes?

**ANSWER:** A local governmental body may not by ordinance authorize or require that a code enforcement board impose an administrative charge or fee on individuals, businesses or other entities found to have violated one or more of that government's technical codes.

**B. AGO 85-17: FINES AND LIENS**

**QUESTION 1:** May a code enforcement board refuse to extinguish a lien against property cited and fined for a violation of an ordinance where the fine imposed by the code enforcement board has been paid but the property remains in noncompliance?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board is not authorized to refuse to extinguish a lien against property cited and fined for a violation of an ordinance where the fine amount which has been imposed by lien has been paid, even though the property remains in noncompliance. [NOTE: The Legislature amended Chapter 162 in 1989 to provide that fines shall continue to accrue, and the corresponding lien shall continue to exist, until the violator comes into compliance or until a judgment is rendered in a suit to foreclose. This amended language appears to eliminate any possibility of a violator "extinguishing" a lien by payment prior to bringing the property into compliance.]

**QUESTION 2:** May a code enforcement board levy a fine against a person who is cited for a code violation but who brings the property into compliance before the case is heard?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board may not levy a fine against a person who is cited by who brings the property into compliance prior to the case being presented to the code enforcement board. [NOTE: This restriction does not apply to repeat violations, which may be fined retroactively for the days the repeat violation existed, even if the violation is brought into compliance prior to the code enforcement board hearing. See AGO 86-76 and 1989 Amendments to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes.]

**QUESTION 3:** Is a code enforcement board authorized to impose an initial fine on a violator based solely on its finding that a violation has occurred and before the code enforcement board has actually ordered compliance and before the compliance period has expired?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board possesses no authority to impose an initial fine on a violator based solely on its finding that a violation has occurred and before the board has actually ordered compliance and the compliance period has expired. [NOTE: This restriction does not apply as to repeat violations. See AGO 86-76 and 1989 Amendments to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes.]

**C. AGO 85-26: HOMESTEAD PROPERTY**

**SUMMARY:** A code enforcement board lien is not enforceable against homestead property by foreclosure. The liens created pursuant to Section 162.09, F.S., are neither a "tax" nor an "assessment" within the constitutional meaning of those terms.

**NOTE:** Although the County cannot foreclose against homestead property, it can preserve its lien for a longer time period (prior to automatic extinguishment 20 years after filing of the lien) by obtaining a final judgment against the owner and the property. Then if the homestead property were sold, the County would become a judgment creditor and the judgment would have to be paid before clear title

could pass to the purchaser.

**D. AGO 85-27: REQUESTS FOR REHEARING**

**QUESTION:** May a code enforcement board grant a violator a rehearing after entry of an order finding a violation and ordering corrective action and, if so, what is the time limit for such rehearing request?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board has the authority to rehear or reconsider a matter which is the subject of one of its orders, and to modify its order if necessary. Such rehearing or reconsideration request must be made before an appeal has been taken as provided in Section 162.11, F.S., and before the 30-day time period provided by that statute for taking an appeal to the circuit court has expired. A local governing body has no power to remove or restrict the right of a code enforcement board to rehear or reconsider a matter, or to set by ordinance the time period for the rehearing application other than as provided in Chapter 162, F.S.

**E. AGO 85-33: MAJORITY VOTE; INTERMITTENT CODE VIOLATION; COMMUNITY SERVICE AS A PENALTY; FINES**

**QUESTION 1:** May a code enforcement board take action on the affirmative vote of three members where only four members are present and voting?

**ANSWER 1:** Yes.

**QUESTION 2:** In the case of an intermittent code violation, what authority does a code enforcement board have to provide that:

- (a) A fine shall be assessed for each day that a Code Inspector observes noncompliance, even though compliance may be observed on other days?
- (b) Upon future determination by a Code Inspector that a violation exists, notice shall be given to the violator by posting on property or by certified mail that the violation is presumed to continue until proof is given to the Code Inspector that the violation has ceased?
- (c) A fine shall be assessed in the event of future noncompliance, even though at the time of such provision by the board the violator has come into compliance?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board has no authority to take action with respect to an intermittent code violation unless the Code Inspector initiates proceedings, and the code enforcement board determines at a hearing, that such violation has not been brought into compliance at the time of the hearing. Moreover, a code enforcement board has no authority to delegate the power to assess a fine for noncompliance to a Code Inspector, nor to establish any presumptions relative thereto, and may levy a fine against a violator only pursuant to the provisions of Section 162.09, Florida Statutes. [Note: But see AGO 86-76, Question/Answer 2, relating to repeat violations, and 1989 Amendments to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, allowing quicker imposition of fine on repeat violations.]

**QUESTION 3:** May a code enforcement board require community service rather than payment of a monetary fine as a method of assuring continued compliance?

**ANSWER:** In the absence of any provision of law authorizing a code enforcement board to impose a penalty other than the fine provided for in Section 162.09, F.S., such a board may not require community service rather than payment of the monetary fine prescribed by Section 162.09, F.S., as a method of assuring continued compliance with applicable codes.

**NOTE:** Although "community service" may not be required by code enforcement board order, there appears to be authority to order other mitigation-related measures specifically relating to the environmental damage done to a site, which may benefit the public (such as providing seedling trees for replacement), pursuant to the language of Chapter 162, F.S., and Leon County's ordinances.

**QUESTION 4:** What flexibility does a code enforcement board have under Chapter 162, F.S., in assessing one fine for noncompliance during a brief period after the order is given, and then no fine or a lesser fine for another period of time?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board has no flexibility to assess one fine for noncompliance during a brief period after the order is given, and then no fine or a lesser fine for another period of time.

**QUESTION 5:** Where a person is found to have been in violation, but to have corrected the violation by the time of the hearing before the code enforcement board, may a fine or an administrative fee be assessed for the past violation?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board has no authority to assess any fine or administrative fee for a violation which has been corrected by the time of the hearing of the board.

**NOTE:** There is an exception in the current statute and local ordinance for assessing fines for violations that have been corrected at the time of hearing where the violation is found not only to have occurred but to have been a repeat of a violation for which an order has previously been entered against the violator. In case of a repeat violation, fine may be imposed retroactively for days the violation is shown to have existed subsequent to the date of the Code Inspector's initial notice of violation even though the violation has been corrected at the time of hearing.

#### **F. AGO 85-84: REPEAT VIOLATIONS; CONSENT AGREEMENTS; NOTICE**

**QUESTION 1:** Is a code enforcement board authorized after an initial hearing to issue an order demanding compliance with a code provision within some set period, whereby said order specifically requires that if the violator is in noncompliance, either at the conclusion of the thirty day period or at any time within one year or other reasonable time period from the date of the code enforcement board's original order, then the code enforcement board shall meet again to certify a fine for the time period during which the violator was in noncompliance with the code enforcement board's prior order?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board must find that the same violation has been repeated by the same violator before it may impose a fine for each day the repeated violation continued. (NOTE: But see AGO 86-76, Question/Answer 2, discussing 1986 amendments to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, which allows fine for repeat violation without additional hearing; See also 1989 Amendments to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes.)

**QUESTION 2:** May a code enforcement board establish a plan involving a schedule of fines for particular offenses which a violator of a code provision may consent to pay to avoid the initial hearing before the code enforcement board?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board is not authorized to establish a plan involving a schedule of fines for particular offenses whereby a violator of a code provision may consent to pay a designated fine in order to avoid the initial hearing before the board.

**QUESTION 3:** Is a code enforcement board authorized to post or publish notices required by Chapter 162, F.S., where the methods specified in the act are impossible or impractical?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board may not authorize an alternative method of delivering notice than that prescribed in Chapter 162, F.S., as amended. [NOTE: 1989 Amendments to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, allow alternative service methods where regular notice methods are impossible under circumstances as specified.]

**G. AGO 86-10: LIENS; FINES**

**SUMMARY:** A code enforcement board is not authorized to provide for the continued running of a fine against a property owner for noncompliance after the lien has been recorded, nor may a particular lien be amended to add additional fines. [NOTE: 1989 Amendments to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, provide that fines continue to accrue, even after lien is filed, until the property is brought into compliance or until a judgment is rendered in a suit of foreclose such a lien.]

**H. AGO 86-76: SETTING FINES; NOTICE**

**QUESTION 1:** May a code enforcement board set fine for noncompliance at the time an order is entered requiring compliance with an ordinance within some specified period?

**ANSWER:** No. The initial order should set forth required remedial action to achieve compliance, with some specified time within which compliance must result, and should include notice that the code enforcement board may order a fine to be imposed upon the violator for each day noncompliance continues beyond the ordered compliance date. If the Code Inspector later notifies code enforcement board by affidavit that the order has not been complied with, code enforcement board may then issue another order setting a per day fine amount, retroactive from the originally required compliance date, without further hearing being required. [NOTE: The fine amount may be set, retroactive from the date of the Code Inspector's notice of a repeat violation to the violator, in the initial order all a repeat violation, as set forth in 1989 Amendments to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes.]

**QUESTION 2:** May a code enforcement board at the time an order is entered requiring compliance set a fine for any subsequent repeat violation by the violator?

**ANSWER:** As discussed in the preceding question, two orders are necessary --one setting a required compliance date, and another setting the per day fine amount for a violation a Code Inspector reports as remaining unremedied by the date set by a code enforcement board order for compliance. However, a second hearing is not necessary as a precedent to the second order, and upon notification to the code enforcement board that, although the violation was corrected within the time specified, the violation has been repeated, the code enforcement board may order the violator to pay a fine up to \$500 per day for each repeated occurrence of the violations without additional hearing. [NOTE: 1986 Amendments to 162.09 lead to this result, which is a change from previous AG opinion requiring separate hearing as to each alleged repeat violation. But see 1989 Amendments, which allow a retroactive fine of up to \$500 per day in the initial code enforcement board order, after hearing, on a repeat violation.]

**QUESTION 3:** May proper service of notice of code enforcement board hearing be obtained by posting the property where the violation occurs and by posting said notice in a conspicuous place in City Hall at least five days prior to the hearing date if methods of service set forth in Section 162.12, Florida

Statutes (certified mail or hand-delivery by Code Inspector), have failed?

**ANSWER:** No; the statute does not authorize notice to be served by posting as an alternative service method. However, the amended statute does permit the sheriff or other law enforcement officer or other person designated by the local governing body, in addition to the Code Inspector, to serve the notice. [NOTE: The Legislature amended Section 162.12, Florida Statutes, in 1989 to provide for alternative methods of service (i.e. posting and/or publication) where warranted under the circumstances of a case.]

**I. AGO 87-24: CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD ALTERNATE MEMBER APPOINTMENTS**

**QUESTION:** May a local governing body appoint one or more individuals to serve as alternate members of the code enforcement board, in addition to the Board's seven regular members?

**ANSWER:** No, there is no authority under Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, for appointment of alternate members. [NOTE: Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, was amended in 1989 to specifically provide for appointment of up to two alternate code enforcement board members.]

**J. AGO 88-36: AGGREGATION OF SEPARATE PROPERTIES INTO SINGLE CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD ACTION: NOTICE TO OWNERS**

**QUESTION 1:** May properties with different physical locations/addresses, but owned by one owner, be aggregated into one action for a code violation hearing pursuant to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes?

**ANSWER:** No. Chapter 162 appears to contemplate that each code violation will be treated as a separate cause of action to be considered by the code enforcement board, and does not authorize consolidation of all properties with violations owned by one person into a single action.

**QUESTION 2:** If property is held jointly or by two or more persons, should notification and service required by Sections 162.06 and 162.12, Florida Statutes, be achieved as to all persons owning an interest in such property?

**ANSWER:** Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, requires notice to be given to the violator of an ordinance. In the absence of any legislative or judicial direction otherwise, the Attorney General cannot conclude that written notice of a violation should be given to all persons owning an interest in property upon which a violation has occurred. [NOTE: In the sense that all property owners can be considered "violators" under Leon County Code provisions, and to ensure that liens filed are not subjected to challenge, it is recommended that all record owners of a parcel in violation be provided with notice as to CEB actions. In addition, 1989 Amendments to Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, provide for filing of initial code enforcement board orders on violations in the public records to provide notice to all subsequent owners or other persons interested in property owned by a violator.]

**K. AGO 88-62: CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD MEMBERS ABSTAINING FROM VOTE: ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS**

**QUESTION 1:** May a code enforcement board member disqualify himself from considering a matter before the code enforcement board, pursuant to Chapter 38, Florida Statutes, and if not, is there any basis for disqualification for the reasons set forth in Chapter 38?

**ANSWER:** A code enforcement board member may not disqualify himself from considering a matter pursuant to Chapter 38, Florida Statutes (relating to disqualification of judges). If the code enforcement board adopts rules relating to the conduct of meetings, such rules must conform to Section 286.012, Florida Statutes, which requires a code enforcement board member to vote regarding any official act to be taken or adopted at a code enforcement board meeting unless there appears to be a conflict of interest pursuant to Sections 112.311, 112.313, or 112.3143, Florida Statutes, in which case the member shall comply with disclosure requirements of Section 112.3143, Florida Statutes. Any question as to what constitutes a "conflict of interest" as used in Chapter 112, Florida Statutes, must be submitted to the Florida Commission on Ethics.

**QUESTION 2:** Are the provisions of Section 162.05(1), Florida Statutes, regarding absence from 2 of 3 consecutive meetings, applicable to regular meetings only?

**ANSWER:** The provisions of Section 162.05(1), Florida Statutes, apply to all meetings of the code enforcement board, in the absence of a legislative or judicial determination otherwise. Nothing in the language of Section 162.05(1), Florida Statutes, defines or limits the term "meetings" to particular types of meetings of the code enforcement board.

**L. AGO 91-28: FORECLOSING ON A CEB LIEN**

**SUMMARY:** An opinion by the Attorney General's Office (AGO 91-28) expressing the opinion that local governments are authorized to recover all costs incurred in foreclosing on a code enforcement board lien; and, that Section 170.10, Florida Statutes, authorizes a local government to foreclose against a property owner for unpaid special assessments and to include legal costs incurred in such a foreclosure.

## APPENDIX 2

### **Description of the Progression of a Case from the Code Enforcement Board to the Nuisance Abatement Board and What Happens Afterwards**

1. When a case is heard by the CEB and the Respondent is found in violation, the Respondent is notified and advised to correct the violation within a specified timeframe.
2. If the Respondent fails to comply by the ordered deadline date, an Order Imposing Fine is filed against the Respondent and a daily fine will begin to accrue.
3. A follow up site inspection is conducted and the Code Inspector determines whether the conditions observed indicate the building or premises may present a serious and continuing danger to the public or occupants. Inspections are conducted within a reasonable time.
4. If the Code Inspector concludes that the conditions may present a serious and continuing danger to the public or occupants, a Notice of Public Nuisance is mailed to the owner by certified mail, return receipt requested; establishing a timeframe by which compliance is to be obtained.
5. If the owner fails to comply within the established time frame, the case is referred to the NAB. Notice of Hearing is sent to the owner by certified mail, return receipt requested.
6. If seeking to demolish a structure, a title/lien search is conducted to determine if there are any lien holders. A Notice of Hearing is mailed to any lien holders by certified mail, return receipt requested.
7. The case is then heard by the NAB, which may find a present a serious and continuing danger to the public's health, safety, and welfare, including any occupants of the property. If such a finding is made, the Respondent is notified and advised to correct the nuisance within a specified timeframe.
8. If the owner fails to comply by the ordered deadline date, staff takes steps to hire a contractor to abate the property as authorized by the NAB. If the abatement involves demolishing of a structure, a Notice to Vacate is posted at the property and mailed to the Respondent.
9. Quotes outlining the costs to abate are obtained from 3 contractors (approved by County).
10. The approved contractor takes necessary steps to bring the property into compliance. These steps may vary based by case type (i.e., building, junk and mowing).
11. Once compliance is obtained, a Notice of Abatement Costs is mailed to the Respondent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

12. If payment is not received within thirty days after the mailing of the Notice of Abatement Costs, a lien is filed against the property for all costs associated with the abatement.

## **Appendix 3 Subpoena Forms**

**LEON COUNTY CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD  
Subpoena/Subpoena Duces Tecum**

Leon County, )  
Petitioner, )  
vs. )  
\_\_\_\_\_, )  
Respondent )  
\_\_\_\_\_ /

TO: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**YOU ARE SUMMONED TO APPEAR IN PERSON OR BY COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA TECHNOLOGY BEFORE THE LEON COUNTY CODE ENFORCEMENT BOARD AT:**

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION IF APPEARING IN PERSON:  
Renaissance Center, 2nd Floor  
435 N. Macomb Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32301

IF APPEARING BY COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA TECHNOLOGY (Zoom or similar): Request a meeting link from the Code Compliance Supervisor via email within 24 hours of receipt of the subpoena/subpoena duces tecum. You must ensure that you have both video and audio capabilities adequate to be clearly heard and seen by the Board. The link will be emailed to you before the hearing.

Send your request for a link to the Code Compliance Supervisor at: \_\_\_\_\_.

**FOR SUBPOENA DUCES TECUM:**

If a list of requested information appears below, you will need to submit said documentation in person or in PDF format via email to the Code Compliance Supervisor at least 24 hours before the hearing.

Documentation to be submitted:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

None required

WITNESS my hand and seal of the Code Enforcement Board this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

Note: Only the Code Enforcement Board may release you from this subpoena/subpoena duces tecum. Inquiries regarding your obligations under this subpoena/subpoena duces tecum may be directed to the Code Compliance Supervisor at the email address set forth above or via telephone at: (850) 606-1300.

This subpoena/subpoena duces tecum was requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact the Code Compliance Supervisor at least 24 hours before the scheduled hearing.

