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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- ABANDONED MOBILE AND  
MANUFACTURED HOME ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Keable, Edwards, and Silva

Date Introduced: February 27, 2014

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 31 of the General Laws entitled "MOTOR AND OTHER  
2 VEHICLES" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 44.2

4 ABANDONED MOBILE AND MANUFACTURED HOME ACT

5 **31-44.2-1. Legislative findings and purpose.** – The general assembly finds that  
6 abandoned mobile and manufactured homes are a nuisance because they cause blight and depress  
7 property values. This act is intended to provide local governments and landowners with the  
8 authority to remove abandoned mobile and manufactured homes while protecting property rights.

9 **31-44.2-2. Definitions.** – As used in this chapter:

10 (1) "Department" means the department of business regulation.

11 (2) "Mobile and manufactured home" means a detached residential unit designed:

12 (i) For a long-term occupancy and containing sleeping accommodations, a flush toilet,  
13 and a tub or shower bath and kitchen facilities, having both permanent plumbing and electrical  
14 connections for attachment to outside systems;

15 (ii) To be transported on its own wheels or on a flatbed or other trailer or detachable  
16 wheels; and

17 (iii) To be placed on pads, piers, or tied down, at the site where it is to be occupied as a  
18 residence complete and ready for occupancy, except for minor and incidental unpacking and

1 assembly operations and connection to utilities systems.

2 (4) "Abandoned mobile and manufactured home" means a mobile and manufactured  
3 home that is:

4 (i) Not connected to electricity or not connected to a source of safe potable water supply  
5 sufficient for normal residential needs, or both; or

6 (ii) Not connected to an adequate wastewater disposal system; or

7 (iii) Unoccupied for a period of at least one hundred twenty (120) days and for which  
8 there is clear and convincing evidence that the occupant does not intend to return; or

9 (iv) So damaged, decayed, dilapidated, unsanitary, unsafe or vermin infested that it  
10 creates a hazard to the health and safety of the occupants or the public.

11 (5) "Landowner" means the owner of the real property on which an abandoned mobile or  
12 manufactured home is located.

13 (6) "Municipality" means the city or town in which the mobile or manufactured home is  
14 located.

15 (7) "Licensee" means any person or agent licensed under § 31-44-1.7 who is directly or  
16 indirectly engaged in the business of maintaining or operating a mobile and manufactured home  
17 park under the provisions of chapter 31-44.

18 **31-44.2-3. Jurisdiction.** -- The district court of this state shall exercise jurisdiction in  
19 both law and equity over removal of abandoned mobile or manufactured homes with respect to  
20 any conduct in this state governed by this chapter or with respect to any claim arising from a  
21 transaction subject to this chapter. In addition to any other method provided by rule or by statute,  
22 personal jurisdiction may be acquired in a civil action or proceeding commenced in the court by  
23 the service of process in the manner provided herein.

24 **31-44.2-4. Service of process for actions pursuant to chapter.** -- (a)(1) In actions  
25 pursuant to this chapter, the summons for an action for removal of an abandoned mobile or  
26 manufactured home shall be in the form provided in this chapter. At the time of filing of the  
27 complaint, the clerk shall mark the date of hearing upon the summons, which shall be the ninth  
28 (9th) day after filing of the complaint, or the first court day following the ninth (9th) day. For the  
29 purposes of this section only, the time of filing of the complaint shall be the date upon which the  
30 clerk assigns a case number to the action and the filing fee is paid to the clerk. On the same day  
31 that the complaint is filed, the plaintiff's attorney or, if pro se, the plaintiff, or if more than one,  
32 the person filing the complaint shall mail a copy of the summons and complaint by first class  
33 mail, to the defendant, shall complete the proof of service on a copy of the original summons and  
34 file the completed proof of service in the appropriate court. The clerk shall note on the docket the

1 mailing date of the summons and complaint, and shall complete the proof of service on the  
2 original summons. The plaintiff shall deliver the original summons and a copy thereof, together  
3 with a copy of the complaint to the division of sheriffs or any constable of the county in which  
4 the appropriate court is located. The officer receiving the copies shall serve them by:

5 (i) Handing them to the defendant;

6 (ii) Serving them at the defendant's dwelling unit to a person of suitable age and  
7 discretion then residing therein; or

8 (iii) If none be found, by posting them conspicuously on the door to defendant's dwelling  
9 unit.

10 (2) The deputy sheriff or constable serving the summons and complaint shall make proof  
11 of service on the original summons and shall file it with the clerk of the appropriate court at or  
12 before the time of the hearing. The proof of service shall show the manner and the day, hour, and  
13 place of service, and shall show that the defendant was served no less than five (5) days before  
14 the hearing.

15 (b) In all actions pursuant to this chapter, the procedure shall be as follows:

16 (1) The summons pursuant to this chapter shall be in the form provided in § 31-44.2-8.

17 (2) Service shall be made pursuant to Rule 4 of the district court civil rules, or other  
18 appropriate rule of court.

19 (c) If a plaintiff or defendant is not a resident of this state or is a corporation not  
20 authorized to do business in this state and engages in any conduct in this state governed by this  
21 chapter, or engages in a transaction subject to this chapter, he or she may designate an agent upon  
22 whom service of process may be made in this state. The agent shall be a resident of this state or a  
23 corporation authorized to do business in this state. The designation shall be in writing and filed  
24 with the secretary of state. If no designation is made and filed or if the process cannot be served  
25 in this state upon the designated agent, process may be served upon the secretary of state, but  
26 service upon the secretary of state is not effective unless the plaintiff or petitioner forthwith mails  
27 a copy of the process and pleading by registered or certified mail to the defendant or respondent  
28 at his or her last reasonably ascertainable address. An affidavit of compliance with this subsection  
29 shall be filed with the clerk of the court on or before the return day of the process, if any, or  
30 within any further time the court allows.

31 (d) If, at the time of hearing, it appears that the clerk failed to provide mail service as  
32 required by subsection (a) of this section, or that the mailed service was undeliverable, service  
33 shall nevertheless be deemed complete if proof of service reflects that service was accomplished  
34 in accordance with subsection (a)(1)(i) or (ii) of this section.

1           **31-44.2-5. Order for removal of an abandoned mobile or manufactured home. – (a)**

2           An action for the removal of an abandoned mobile or manufactured home may be commenced by  
3           a landowner/licensee/municipality if a mobile or manufactured home has been abandoned and the  
4           following conditions have been met:

5           (1) The mobile or manufactured home is not entitled to be situated on the property of the  
6           landowner/municipality/licensee; and

7           (2) The mobile or manufactured home is:

8           (i) Not connected to electricity or not connected to a source of safe potable water supply  
9           sufficient for normal residential needs, or both; or

10           (ii) Not connected to an adequate wastewater disposal system; or

11           (iii) Unoccupied for a period of at least one hundred twenty (120) days and for which  
12           there is clear and convincing evidence that the occupant does not intend to return; or

13           (iv) So damaged, decayed, dilapidated, unsanitary, unsafe or vermin infested that it  
14           creates a hazard to the health and safety of the occupants or the public.

15           (b) The action shall be commenced by filing a thirty (30) day notice for removal of the  
16           mobile or manufactured home, which shall be filed in the appropriate court according to the form  
17           provided in § 31-44.2-8.

18           (c) The summons shall be in the form provided in § 31-4.2-8 and shall specify that the  
19           defendant has thirty (30) days from the date of service in which to remedy the allegations in the  
20           complaint, and that if he or she fails to do so within that time, he or she shall be defaulted. The  
21           matter may be assigned for hearing in accordance with the rules of procedure of the appropriate  
22           court.

23           (d) If the court finds that the defendant failed to remedy the allegations contained in the  
24           complaint to the satisfaction of the court, the court shall issue an order for the removal of the  
25           abandoned mobile or manufactured home in accordance with this chapter.

26           **31-44.2-6. Appeals. – Appeals of actions brought under this chapter shall be pursuant to**  
27           § 9-12-10.1.

28           **31-44.2-7. Execution. -- If no appeal is claimed, and if the judgment has not been**  
29           satisfied, execution shall be issued on the sixth (6th) day following judgment. Executions shall be  
30           issued only to the division of sheriffs. Every execution issued by any district court pursuant to  
31           this chapter shall continue in full force and effect for one year after the date thereof, and be  
32           returnable to the district court which issued it in accordance with the provisions of § 9-25-21. All  
33           costs in carrying out the mandates of the execution may be added to the execution by the clerk  
34           upon approval of the court upon presentment of evidence of the costs.

1           31-44.2-8. Notices and complaint forms. – (a) A notice in substantially the following  
2 language shall suffice for the purpose of giving an owner notice of removal of an abandoned  
3 mobile or manufactured home pursuant to chapter 31-44.2:

4 THIRTY DAY NOTICE FOR REMOVAL OF MOBILE OR MANUFACTURED HOME

5           Date of Notice: \_\_\_\_\_

6           You are notified that a certain mobile or manufactured home (describe mobile home in  
7 terms of size, color, make, and model, if known) located at (give address or describe location)  
8 meets the definition of an abandoned mobile or manufactured home within the meaning of the  
9 "Abandoned Mobile or Manufactured Home Act" pursuant to chapter 31-44.2. Unless all  
10 delinquent taxes (including penalty and interest) are paid, and electric, water, and waste services  
11 are restored to this mobile or manufactured home within thirty (30) days of the date of this notice,  
12 the defendant shall remove and dispose of the mobile or manufactured home, and it shall be  
13 disposed of or sold at public auction free and clear of any existing liens.

14 \_\_\_\_\_

15 Signature of plaintiff

16 I certify that I placed in regular U.S. mail first class postage prepaid, a copy of this notice  
17 addressed to the plaintiff on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_\_.

18           (b) A complaint in substantially the following language shall suffice for the purpose of  
19 commencing removal of an abandoned mobile or manufactured home pursuant to chapter 31-  
20 44.2:

21 State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

22 \_\_\_\_\_, Sc. DISTRICT COURT

23 \_\_\_\_\_ DIVISION

24 PLAINTIFF

DEFENDANT

25 \_\_\_\_\_

26 (Landowner/Licensee/Municipality Name) V (Mobile or Manufactured Homeowner Name)

27 \_\_\_\_\_

28 \_\_\_\_\_

29 \_\_\_\_\_

30 (Address) (Address of premises on which abandoned mobile or manufactured home is located)

31 COMPLAINT FOR REMOVAL OF ABANDONED MOBILE OR MANUFACTURED HOME  
32 chapter 31-44.2.

33           (1) Plaintiff is the landowner/licensee/municipality in which defendant's/owner's mobile  
34 or manufactured home is situated.

1           (2) The mobile or manufactured home meets the definition of abandoned mobile or  
2 manufacturer home as set forth in § 31-44.2-2(4) in the following manner.

3           CHECK ONE

4           Defendant's mobile or manufactured home is:

5                     Not connected to electricity or not connected to a source of safe potable water  
6 supply sufficient for normal residential needs, or both; or

7                     Not connected to an adequate wastewater disposal system; or

8                     Unoccupied for a period of at least one hundred twenty (120) days and for which  
9 there is clear and convincing evidence that the occupant does not intend to return; or

10                    So damaged, decayed, dilapidated, unsanitary, unsafe or vermin infested that it  
11 creates a hazard to the health or safety of the occupants or the public.

12          (3) Plaintiff seeks judgment for removal of defendant's mobile or manufactured home. If  
13 you do not remedy this situation within thirty (30) days your mobile or manufactured home will  
14 be removed without further notice on \_\_\_\_\_ (date), which must not be less than thirty-one  
15 (31) days from the date of mailing this notice. Plaintiff seeks costs and fees (if applicable).

16 \_\_\_\_\_  
17          Signature of landowner/licensee/municipality

18          I certify that I placed in regular U.S. mail first class postage prepaid, a copy of this  
19 notice, addressed to plaintiff on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_\_.

20          **31-44.2-9. Auction of abandoned mobile or manufactured home.** – (a) If an order for  
21 removal of an abandoned mobile or manufactured home has been issued in accordance with § 31-  
22 44.2-5 the mobile or manufactured home may be sold at public auction. The purchaser of the  
23 mobile or manufactured home shall take title of the home free and clear of all liens and claims of  
24 ownership, and shall receive a sales receipt and bill of sale, and shall be entitled to register the  
25 mobile or manufactured home.

26          (b) From the proceeds of the sale of abandoned mobile or manufactured home, the  
27 plaintiff shall reimburse itself the expenses of the auction, the costs of towing, preserving, and  
28 storing the mobile or manufactured home and all notices and publication costs incurred pursuant  
29 to this chapter. Any remainder from the proceeds of a sale shall be held for the owner of the  
30 mobile or manufactured home or entitled lienholder for ninety (90) days and then shall be  
31 deposited in a special abandoned mobile or manufactured home fund which shall remain  
32 available for the payment of auction, towing, preserving, storage, and all notice and publication  
33 costs which result from other abandoned mobile and manufactured homes, whenever the proceeds  
34 from a sale of the other abandoned mobile or manufactured homes are insufficient to meet these

1 expenses and costs.

2 (c) Whenever the director finds that moneys in the abandoned mobile or manufactured  
3 home fund are in excess of reserves likely to be needed, he or she may transfer the excess to the  
4 general fund. But in the event there are additional claims against the abandoned mobile or  
5 manufactured home fund, or if the abandoned mobile or manufactured home fund is temporarily  
6 exhausted, these claims shall be met from the general fund to the limit of any transfers previously  
7 made to it pursuant to this chapter.

8 **31-44.2-10. Severability.** – If any provision of this chapter or the application thereof to  
9 any person or circumstances is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or  
10 application of this chapter which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application,  
11 and to this end the provisions of this chapter are severable.

12 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- ABANDONED MOBILE AND  
MANUFACTURED HOME ACT

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- 1           This act would provide a procedure for removal of abandoned mobile or manufactured
- 2 homes under the jurisdiction of the district court.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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