

Chapter 40A.

Eminent Domain.

Article 1.

General.

§ 40A-1. Exclusive provisions.

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of any local act, it is the intent of the General Assembly that, effective August 15, 2006, the uses set out in G.S. 40A-3 are the exclusive uses for which the authority to exercise the power of eminent domain is granted to private condemnors, local public condemnors, and other public condemnors. Effective August 15, 2006, a local act granting the authority to exercise the power of eminent domain to a private condemnor, local public condemnor, or other public condemnor for a use or purpose other than those granted to it in G.S. 40A-3(a), (b), (b1), or (c) is not effective for that use or purpose. Provided that, any eminent domain action commenced before August 15, 2006, for a use or purpose granted in a local act, may be lawfully completed pursuant to the provisions of that local act. The provisions of this subsection shall not repeal any provision of a local act limiting the purposes for which the authority to exercise the power of eminent domain may be used.

(b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the procedures provided by this Chapter shall be the exclusive condemnation procedures to be used in this State by all private condemnors and all local public condemnors. All other provisions in laws, charters, or local acts authorizing the use of other procedures by municipal or county governments or agencies or political subdivisions thereof, or by corporations, associations or other persons are hereby repealed effective January 1, 1982. Provided, that any condemnation proceeding initiated prior to January 1, 1982, may be lawfully completed pursuant to the provisions previously existing.

(c) This Chapter shall not repeal any provision of a local act limiting the purposes for which property may be condemned. Notwithstanding the language of G.S. 40A-3(b), this Chapter also shall not repeal any provision of a local act creating any substantive or procedural requirement or limitation on the authority of a local public condemnor to exercise the power of eminent domain outside of its boundaries. (1981, c. 919, s. 1; 2006-224, s. 1; 2006-259, s. 47.)

§ 40A-2. Definitions.

As used in this Chapter the following words and phrases have the meanings indicated unless the context clearly requires another meaning:

- (1) "Condemnation" means the procedure prescribed by law for exercising the power of eminent domain.
- (2) "Condemnor" means those listed in G.S. 40A-3.
- (3) "Eminent domain" means the power to divest right, title or interest from the owner of property and vest it in the possessor of the power against the will of the owner upon the payment of just compensation for the right, title or interest divested.
- (4) "Judge" means a resident judge of the superior court in the district where the cause is pending, or special judge residing in said district, or a judge of the superior court assigned to hold the courts of said district or an emergency or special judge holding court in the county where the cause is pending.
- (5) "Owner" includes the plural when appropriate and means any person having an interest or estate in the property.

- (6) "Person" includes the plural when appropriate and means a natural person, and any legal entity capable of owning or having interest in property.
- (7) "Property" means any right, title, or interest in land, including leases and options to buy or sell. "Property" also includes rights of access, rights-of-way, easements, water rights, air rights, and any other privilege or appurtenance in or to the possession, use, and enjoyment of land. (1981, c. 919, s. 1.)

§ 40A-3. By whom right may be exercised.

(a) Private Condemnors. – For the public use or benefit, the persons or organizations listed below shall have the power of eminent domain and may acquire by purchase or condemnation property for the stated purposes and other works which are authorized by law.

- (1) Corporations, bodies politic or persons have the power of eminent domain for the construction of railroads, power generating facilities, substations, switching stations, microwave towers, roads, alleys, access railroads, turnpikes, street railroads, plank roads, tramroads, canals, telegraphs, telephones, electric power lines, electric lights, public water supplies, public sewerage systems, flumes, bridges, and pipelines or mains originating in North Carolina for the transportation of petroleum products, coal, gas, limestone or minerals. Land condemned for any liquid pipelines shall:
 - a. Not be less than 50 feet nor more than 100 feet in width; and
 - b. Comply with the provisions of G.S. 62-190(b).The width of land condemned for any natural gas pipelines shall not be more than 100 feet.
- (2) School committees or boards of trustees or of directors of any corporation holding title to real estate upon which any private educational institution is situated, have the power of eminent domain in order to obtain a pure and adequate water supply for such institution.
- (3) Franchised motor vehicle carriers or union bus station companies organized by authority of the Utilities Commission, have the power of eminent domain for the purpose of constructing and operating union bus stations: Provided, that this subdivision shall not apply to any city or town having a population of less than 60,000.
- (4) Any railroad company has the power of eminent domain for the purposes of: constructing union depots; maintaining, operating, improving or straightening lines or of altering its location; constructing double tracks; constructing and maintaining new yards and terminal facilities or enlarging its yard or terminal facilities; connecting two of its lines already in operation not more than six miles apart; or constructing an industrial siding.
- (5) A condemnation in fee simple by a State-owned railroad company for the purposes specified in subdivision (4) of this subsection and as provided under G.S. 124-12(2).

The width of land condemned for any single or double track railroad purpose shall be not less than 80 feet nor more than 100 feet, except where the road may run through a town, where it may be of less width, or where there may be deep cuts or high embankments, where it may be of greater width.

No rights granted or acquired under this subsection shall in any way destroy or abridge the rights of the State to regulate or control any railroad company or to regulate foreign corporations doing business in this State. Whenever it is necessary for any railroad company doing business in this State to cross the street or streets in a town or city in order to carry out the orders of the Utilities Commission, to construct an industrial siding, the power is hereby conferred upon such railroad company to occupy such street or streets of any such town or city within the State. Provided, license so to do be first obtained from the board of aldermen, board of commissioners, or other governing authorities of such town or city.

No such condemnor shall be allowed to have condemned to its use, without the consent of the owner, his burial ground, usual dwelling house and yard, kitchen and garden, unless condemnation of such property is expressly authorized by statute.

The power of eminent domain shall be exercised by private condemnors under the procedures of Article 2 of this Chapter.

(b) Local Public Condemnors – Standard Provision. – For the public use or benefit, the governing body of each municipality or county shall possess the power of eminent domain and may acquire by purchase, gift or condemnation any property, either inside or outside its boundaries, for the following purposes.

- (1) Opening, widening, extending, or improving roads, streets, alleys, and sidewalks. The authority contained in this subsection is in addition to the authority to acquire rights-of-way for streets, sidewalks and highways under Article 9 of Chapter 136. The provisions of this subdivision (1) shall not apply to counties.
- (2) Establishing, extending, enlarging, or improving any of the public enterprises listed in G.S. 160A-311 for cities, or G.S. 153A-274 for counties.
- (3) Establishing, enlarging, or improving parks, playgrounds, and other recreational facilities.
- (4) Establishing, extending, enlarging, or improving storm sewer and drainage systems and works, or sewer and septic tank lines and systems.
- (5) Establishing, enlarging, or improving hospital facilities, cemeteries, or library facilities.
- (6) Constructing, enlarging, or improving city halls, fire stations, office buildings, courthouse jails and other buildings for use by any department, board, commission or agency.
- (7) Establishing drainage programs and programs to prevent obstructions to the natural flow of streams, creeks and natural water channels or improving drainage facilities. The authority contained in this subdivision is in addition to any authority contained in Chapter 156.
- (8) Acquiring designated historic properties, designated as such before October 1, 1989, or acquiring a designated landmark designated as such on or after October 1, 1989, for which an application has been made for a certificate of appropriateness for demolition, in pursuance of the purposes of G.S. 160A-399.3, Chapter 160A, Article 19, Part 3B, effective until October 1, 1989, or G.S. 160A-400.14, whichever is appropriate.
- (9) Opening, widening, extending, or improving public wharves.

The board of education of any municipality or county or a combined board may exercise the power of eminent domain under this Chapter for purposes authorized by Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.

The power of eminent domain shall be exercised by local public condemnors under the procedures of Article 3 of this Chapter.

(b1) Local Public Condemnors – Modified Provision for Certain Localities. – For the public use or benefit, the governing body of each municipality or county shall possess the power of eminent domain and may acquire by purchase, gift or condemnation any property or interest therein, either inside or outside its boundaries, for the following purposes.

- (1) Opening, widening, extending, or improving roads, streets, alleys, and sidewalks. The authority contained in this subsection is in addition to the authority to acquire rights-of-way for streets, sidewalks and highways under Article 9 of Chapter 136. The provisions of this subdivision (1) shall not apply to counties.
- (2) Establishing, extending, enlarging, or improving any of the public enterprises listed in G.S. 160A-311 for cities, or G.S. 153A-274 for counties.
- (3) Establishing, enlarging, or improving parks, playgrounds, and other recreational facilities.
- (4) Establishing, extending, enlarging, or improving storm sewer and drainage systems and works, or sewer and septic tank lines and systems.
- (5) Establishing, enlarging, or improving hospital facilities, cemeteries, or library facilities.
- (6) Constructing, enlarging, or improving city halls, fire stations, office buildings, courthouse jails and other buildings for use by any department, board, commission or agency.
- (7) Establishing drainage programs and programs to prevent obstructions to the natural flow of streams, creeks and natural water channels or improving drainage facilities. The authority contained in this subdivision is in addition to any authority contained in Chapter 156.
- (8) Acquiring designated historic properties, designated as such before October 1, 1989, or acquiring a designated landmark designated as such on or after October 1, 1989, for which an application has been made for a certificate of appropriateness for demolition, in pursuance of the purposes of G.S. 160A-399.3, Chapter 160A, Article 19, Part 3, effective until October 1, 1989, or G.S. 160A-400.14, whichever is appropriate.
- (9) Opening, widening, extending, or improving public wharves.
- (10) Engaging in or participating with other governmental entities in acquiring, constructing, reconstructing, extending, or otherwise building or improving beach erosion control or flood and hurricane protection works, including, but not limited to, the acquisition of any property that may be required as a source for beach renourishment.
- (11) Establishing access for the public to public trust beaches and appurtenant parking areas.

The board of education of any municipality or county or a combined board may exercise the power of eminent domain under this Chapter for purposes authorized by Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.

The power of eminent domain shall be exercised by local public condemnors under the procedures of Article 3 of this chapter.

This subsection applies only to Carteret and Dare Counties, the Towns of Atlantic Beach, Carolina Beach, Caswell Beach, Emerald Isle, Holden Beach, Indian Beach, Kill Devil Hills, Kitty Hawk, Kure Beach, Nags Head, North Topsail Beach, Oak Island, Ocean Isle Beach, Pine Knoll Shores, Sunset Beach, Surf City, Topsail Beach, and Wrightsville Beach, and the Village of Bald Head Island. This subsection, excluding subdivision (11) of this subsection, applies to the Town of Duck.

(c) Other Public Condemnors. – For the public use or benefit, the following political entities shall possess the power of eminent domain and may acquire property by purchase, gift, or condemnation for the stated purposes.

- (1) A sanitary district board established under the provisions of Part 2 of Article 2 of Chapter 130A for the purposes stated in that Part.
- (2) The board of commissioners of a mosquito control district established under the provisions of Part 2 of Article 12 of Chapter 130A for the purposes stated in that Part.
- (3) A hospital authority established under the provisions of Part B of Article 2 of Chapter 131E for the purposes stated in that Part, provided, however, that the provisions of G.S. 131E-24(c) shall continue to apply.
- (4) A watershed improvement district established under the provisions of Article 2 of Chapter 139 for the purposes stated in that Article, provided, however, that the provisions of G.S. 139-38 shall continue to apply.
- (5) A housing authority established under the provisions of Article 1 of Chapter 157 for the purposes of that Article, provided, however, that the provisions of G.S. 157-11 shall continue to apply.
- (6) A corporation as defined in G.S. 157-50 for the purposes of Article 3 of Chapter 157, provided, however, the provisions of G.S. 157-50 shall continue to apply.
- (7) A commission established under the provisions of Article 22 of Chapter 160A for the purposes of that Article.
- (8) An authority created under the provisions of Article 1 of Chapter 162A for the purposes of that Article.
- (9) A district established under the provisions of Article 4 of Chapter 162A for the purposes of that Article.
- (10) A district established under the provisions of Article 5 of Chapter 162A for purposes of that Article.
- (11) The board of trustees of a community college established under the provisions of Article 2 of Chapter 115D for the purposes of that Article.
- (12) A district established under the provisions of Article 6 of Chapter 162A for the purposes of that Article.
- (13) A regional public transportation authority established under Article 26 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes for the purposes of that Article.

The power of eminent domain shall be exercised by a public condemnor listed in this subsection under the procedures of Article 3 of this Chapter. (1852, c. 92, s. 1; R.C., c. 61, s. 9; 1874-5, c. 83; Code, s. 1698; Rev., s. 2575; 1907, cc. 39, 458, 783; 1911, c. 62, ss. 25, 26, 27; 1917, cc. 51, 132; C.S., s. 1706; 1923, c. 205; Ex. Sess. 1924, c. 118; 1937, c. 108, s. 1; 1939, c.

228, s. 4; 1941, c. 254; 1947, c. 806; 1951, c. 1002, ss. 1, 2; 1953, c. 1211; 1957, c. 65, s. 11; c. 1045, s. 1; 1961, c. 247; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; c. 1262, s. 86; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; 1981, c. 919, s. 1; 1983, c. 378, s. 2; 1983 (Reg. Sess., 1984), c. 1084; 1985, c. 689, s. 10; c. 696, s. 2; 1987, c. 2, s. 1; c. 564, s. 13; c. 783, s. 6; 1989, c. 706, s. 3; c. 740, s. 1.1; 2000-146, s. 8; 2001-36, ss. 1, 3; 2001-478, s. 2; 2001-487, s. 58; 2002-172, s. 4.1; 2003-282, s. 1; 2003-416, s. 2; 2004-203, s. 32(a), (b); 2006-224, s. 2; 2006-259, s. 47; 2014-86, s. 1.)

§ 40A-4. No prior purchase offer necessary.

The power to acquire property by condemnation shall not depend on any prior effort to acquire the same property by gift or purchase, nor shall the power to negotiate for the gift or purchase of property be impaired by initiation of condemnation proceedings. A potential condemnor who seeks to acquire property by gift or purchase shall give the owner written notice of the provisions of G.S. 40A-6. (1981, c. 919, s. 1; 1997-270, s. 4.)

§ 40A-5. Condemnation of property owned by other condemnors.

(a) A condemnor listed in G.S. 40A-3(a), (b) or (c) shall not possess the power of eminent domain with respect to property owned by the State of North Carolina or a State-owned railroad as defined in G.S. 124-11 unless the State consents to the taking. The State's consent shall be given by the Council of State, or by the Secretary of Administration if the Council of State delegates this authority to the Secretary. In a condemnation proceeding against State property consented to by the State, the only issue shall be the compensation to be paid for the property.

(b) Unless otherwise provided by statute a condemnor listed in G.S. 40A-3(a), (b) or (c) may condemn the property of a private condemnor if such property is not in actual public use or not necessary to the operation of the business of the owner. Unless otherwise provided by statute a condemnor listed in G.S. 40A-3(b) or (c) may condemn the property of a condemnor listed in G.S. 40A-3(b) or (c) if the property proposed to be taken is not being used or held for future use for any governmental or proprietary purpose. (1981, c. 919, s. 1; 2000-146, s. 9.)

§ 40A-6. Reimbursement of owner for taxes paid on condemned property.

(a) An owner whose property is totally taken in fee simple by a condemnor exercising the power of eminent domain, under this Chapter or any other statute, shall be entitled to reimbursement from the condemnor of the pro rata portion of real property taxes paid by the owner that are allocable to a period subsequent to vesting of title in the condemnor, or the effective date of possession of the real property, whichever is earlier.

(b) An owner who meets the following conditions is entitled to reimbursement from the condemnor for all deferred taxes paid by the owner pursuant to G.S. 105-277.4(c) as a result of the condemnation:

- (1) The owner is a natural person whose property is taken in fee simple by a condemnor exercising the power of eminent domain under this Chapter or any other statute.
- (2) The owner also owns agricultural land, horticultural land, or forestland that is contiguous to the condemned property and that is in active production.

The definitions in G.S. 105-277.2 apply in this subsection. (1975, c. 439, s. 1; 1981, c. 919, s. 1; 1997-270, s. 1.)

§ 40A-7. Acquisition of whole parcel or building.

(a) When the proposed project requires condemnation of only a portion of a parcel of land leaving a remainder of such shape, size or condition that it is of little value, a condemnor may acquire the entire parcel by purchase or condemnation. If the remainder is to be condemned the petition filed under the provisions of G.S. 40A-20 or the complaint filed under the provisions of G.S. 40A-41 shall include:

- (1) A determination by the condemnor that a partial taking of the land would substantially destroy the economic value or utility of the remainder; or
- (2) A determination by the condemnor that an economy in the expenditure of public funds will be promoted by taking the entire parcel; or
- (3) A determination by the condemnor that the interest of the public will be best served by acquiring the entire parcel.

(b) Residues acquired under this section may be sold or disposed of in any manner provided for the disposition of property, or may be exchanged for other property needed by the condemnor.

(c) When the proposed project requires condemnation of a portion of a building or other structure, the condemnor may acquire the entire building or structure by purchase or condemnation, together with the right to enter upon the surrounding land for the purpose of removing the building or structure. If the entire building is to be condemned the petition filed under the provisions of G.S. 40A-20, or the complaint filed under the provisions of G.S. 40A-41 shall include a determination by the condemnor either:

- (1) That an economy in the expenditure of public funds will be promoted by acquiring the entire building or structure; or
- (2) That it is not feasible to cut off a portion of the building or structure without destroying the whole; or
- (3) That the convenience, safety, or improvement of the project will be promoted by acquiring the entire building or structure. Nothing in this subsection shall be deemed to compel the condemnor to condemn the underlying fee of the portion of any building or structure that lies outside the project. (1981, c. 919, s. 1.)

§ 40A-8. Costs.

(a) In any action under the provisions of Article 2 or Article 3 of this Chapter, the court in its discretion may award to the owner a sum to reimburse the owner for charges he has paid for appraisers, engineers and plats, provided such appraisers or engineers testify as witnesses, and such plats are received into evidence as exhibits by order of the court.

(b) If a condemnor institutes a proceeding to acquire by condemnation any property and (i) if the final judgment in a resulting action is that the condemnor is not authorized to condemn the property, or (ii) if the condemnor abandons the action, the court with jurisdiction over the action shall after making appropriate findings of fact award each owner of the property sought to be condemned a sum that, in the opinion of the court based upon its findings of fact, will reimburse the owner for: his reasonable costs; disbursements; expenses (including reasonable attorney, appraisal, and engineering fees); and, any loss suffered by the owner because he was unable to transfer title to the property from the date of the filing of the complaint under G.S. 40A-41.

(c) If an action is brought against a condemnor under the provisions of G.S. 40A-20 or 40A-51 seeking compensation for the taking of any interest in property by the condemnor and judgment is for the owner the court shall award to the owner as a part of the judgment after appropriate finding of fact a sum that, in the opinion of the court based upon its finding of fact, will reimburse the owner as set out in subsection (b). (1981, c. 919, s. 1.)

§ 40A-9. Removal of structures on condemned land; lien.

At the request of the owner the condemnor shall allow the owner of property acquired by condemnation to remove any timber, building, permanent improvement, or fixture wholly or partially located on or affixed to the property unless such removal would be inconsistent with the purpose for which condemnation is made, and shall specify a reasonable time within which it may be removed. If the report of the commissioners deducted the value of any such property to be removed from the award of compensation and allowed the cost of removal as an element of damages and the owner fails to remove it within the time allowed, the condemnor may remove it and the cost of the removal and storage of the property shall be chargeable against the owner and a lien upon any remainder of the property not acquired by the condemnor to be recovered or foreclosed in the manner provided by law for recovery of debt or foreclosure of mortgages. (1981, c. 919, s. 1.)

§ 40A-10. Sale or other disposition of land condemned.

When any property condemned by the condemnor is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was condemned, it may be used for any other public purpose or may be sold or disposed of in the manner prescribed by law for the sale and disposition of surplus property. (1981, c. 919, s. 1.)

§ 40A-11. Right of entry prior to condemnation.

Any condemnor without having filed a petition or complaint, depositing any sum or taking any other action provided for in this Chapter, is authorized to enter upon any lands, but not structures, to make surveys, borings, examinations, and appraisals as may be necessary or expedient in carrying out and performing its rights or duties under this Chapter. The condemnor shall give 30 days' notice in writing to the owner at his last known address and the party in possession of the land of the intended entry authorized by this section.

Entry under this section shall not be deemed a trespass or taking within the meaning of this Chapter, however, the condemnor shall make reimbursement for any damage resulting from such activities, and the owner is entitled to bring an action to recover for the damage. If the owner recovers damages of twenty-five percent (25%) over the amount offered by the condemnor for reimbursement for its activities the court, in its discretion, may award reasonable attorney fees to the owner. (1981, c. 919, s. 1.)

§ 40A-12. Additional rules.

Where the procedure for conducting an action under this Chapter is not expressly provided for in this Chapter or by the statutes governing civil procedure, or where the civil procedure statutes are inapplicable, the judge before whom such proceeding may be pending shall have the power to make all the necessary orders and rules of procedure necessary to carry into effect the object and intent of this Chapter. The practice in each case shall conform as near as may be to the practice in other civil actions. (1981, c. 919, s. 1.)

§ 40A-13. Costs and appeal.

In addition to any reimbursement provided for in G.S. 40A-8 the condemnor shall pay all court costs taxed by the court. Either party shall have a right of appeal to the appellate division for errors of law committed in any proceedings provided for in this Chapter in the same manner as in any other civil actions and it shall not be necessary that an appeal bond be posted. (1981, c. 919, s. 1.)

§§ 40A-14 through 40A-18. Reserved for future codification purposes.