

## CHAPTER 75.

## LAND SOLD FOR TAXES.

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75.01 Redemption from tax sale. (1) Any person may, prior to the recording of a tax deed based on a tax sale certificate issued on the sale of a parcel of land or of any interest therein for nonpayment of taxes, redeem the land described in such tax sale certificate or any part thereof or interest therein, whether the tax sale certificate to be redeemed wholly or in part is a lien against all the land or against an undivided interest therein. Such redemption shall be made by paying to the county treasurer of the county where such land was sold, or the city treasurer in the case of any land sold for taxes by the city treasurer of any city in this state, for the use of the purchaser, his heirs or assigns, the amount of the taxes for which such land or interest therein was sold, or such portion thereof as the part or interest redeemed shall amount to, in either case with interest on the amount of said taxes at eight-tenths of one per cent per month or fraction thereof from January 1 after the tax levy year and all other charges authorized by law to be imposed on such tax certificate subsequent to such sale. When so redeemed, prior to the recording of a tax deed, such tax deed shall be void. When an application is made to the county treasurer, or any city treasurer as hereinabove provided, to redeem from any tax sale any divided portion of any part or portion of any lot or parcel of land which was sold for taxes, before making a receipt for the redemption applied for, said treasurer shall give notice of such proposed redemption to any person other than the applicant having a recorded ownership, mortgage, or land contract interest in such land, and to any purchaser of a tax certificate describing such land as shown by said treasurer's records, or may be affected by such application and afford him a hearing. Such notice shall be given in the manner provided in section 75.12 for the giving of notice of application for tax deed, and the costs of giving such notice shall be paid by the person making such application. The time for such hearing shall be fixed at not less than 10 days after the service of such notice has been completed. The county treasurer or such city treasurer shall thereafter determine the true proportion of taxes chargeable to the part or portion sought to be redeemed, and the amount so found shall be the amount required for the redemption thereof. The provisions of this chapter relating to redemption, conveyance, rights of action, limitation and other pro-

ceedings shall apply to all swamp and overflowed lands which have been or may be contracted for sale by any county board. The word "recording" as used in this subsection means the presentation of the tax deed to the register of deeds for record and his acceptance thereof.

(3) Nothing herein contained shall be construed to entitle any holder of a tax certificate against any land in Wisconsin to pay subsequent taxes on such land before the date of sale of such lands for any such tax; and in event such tax certificate holder shall pay such subsequent taxes he shall not be entitled to charge or recover any sum as the principal of or interest on any amount paid as taxes on any lands before such lands have been sold for such taxes. Provided that when a county owns and holds a tax certificate on any land, the county treasurer may attach to such certificate subsequent delinquent taxes without publication and sale as otherwise provided by law.

(4) Redemption of land sold for taxes may be made in partial payments of not less than \$20 and in any multiple of \$5. Each partial payment shall be applied first in payment of all charges authorized by law, then the interest accrued to the date of payment and the balance shall be applied on the principal of the tax. The portion of such payment to be applied as principal shall be ascertained by dividing the amount of the payment by the sum of one plus a figure which is the product of .008 multiplied by the number of months of delinquency, counting any part of a month as a full month. Such amount of principal shall be deducted from the amount offered in payment and the remainder thereof shall be the interest accrued from January 1 next succeeding the year of the tax levy on that portion of the tax which is offered to be paid. Interest on any new balance of principal sum shall be figured from the January 1 next succeeding the year of the tax levy. No payment of any instalment shall be made by the county treasurer to the holder of any certificate unless such certificate is produced and the instalment payment indorsed thereon.

**History:** 1955 c. 10; 1957 c. 316.

**Cross Reference:** As to redemption period, see 74.46.

Redemption statutes are to be liberally construed in favor of the landowner who seeks to redeem lands sold for delinquent taxes. *Swanke v. Oneida County*, 265 W. 92, 60 NW (2d) 756, 62 NW (2d) 7.

**75.03 Redeeming lands of minors, incompetents.** (1) The lands of minors or any interest they may have acquired in lands prior to or after the sale of said lands sold for taxes may be redeemed at any time before such minors come of age and during one year thereafter if such lands were not sold for nonpayment of taxes for five or more consecutive years prior to or after such acquisition; but no such redemption shall be construed as redeeming the interest of any other person in such lands. And the lands of idiots and insane persons so sold or any interest they may have in the same which they acquired prior to such sale and which were not sold for nonpayment of taxes for five or more consecutive years prior to or after such acquisition, may be redeemed at any time during disability and during one year thereafter, and such redemption shall, in all the cases herein mentioned, be made in the manner provided in the preceding section. The heirs of any such minor who shall die after his title to such lands shall accrue and before the expiration of the time when, if he had lived, he might have redeemed the same, may also, if minors, redeem the interest of such minor in such lands within the time in which such minor could, if living, have redeemed the same; and if not minors they may redeem within one year from the time their title so accrues and within the time in which such minor could, if living, have redeemed the same.

(2) The redemption of lands or any interest therein of minors, idiots or insane persons, which they acquired prior or subsequent to the date of sale of the lands and which lands were sold for nonpayment of taxes for 5 or more consecutive years, prior to or after such acquisition, shall be made in the manner provided in s. 75.01.

(3) When the purchaser of such lands at tax sale or the owner of tax certificates thereon is the owner and holder of delinquent tax certificates issued upon tax sales for 5 or more years, and the time for issuance of a deed upon any of such certificates has not expired, the owner and holder of such certificates may foreclose by action pursuant to section 75.19; or a tax deed may be issued to him as provided by this chapter and he may foreclose any right of redemption or interest of any minor, idiot or insane person by separate action pursuant to section 75.19, which he may also do if the tax deed was issued prior to the effective date of this amendment. In such action the minor, idiot or insane person must appear by guardian ad litem as provided by law, and his guardian, if he has one, shall be joined as a party defendant. This subsection as amended in 1945 is retroactive January 1, 1946. The postponement of the effective date of the retroactive provision is to afford an opportunity to all persons having an interest in lands affected to redeem such lands from the lien of tax certificates prior to such effective date.

**History:** 1955 c. 10.

Where, prior to the enactment of ch. 453, Laws 1939, the statutes, 75.03 and 75.28 (1), afforded a minor the right to redeem lands sold for delinquent taxes, at any time during

his minority and within one year thereafter, and such ch. 453 amended these sections so that this special period of redemption granted to minors was limited to apply only in cases in which the minor's lands were not sold for nonpayment of taxes for 5 or more consecutive years, but such ch. 453 contained no expression of legislative intent that the same should be retrospective in operation, such change made by it is construed to be prospective only in effect. *Swanke v. Oneida County*, 265 W 92, 60 NW (2d) 756, 62 NW (2d) 7.

Where ch. 391, Laws 1949, amended 75.28 (1), by eliminating the previous provision in 75.28 (1) that the limitation of action imposed by 75.27 should not apply to a minor, and eliminating the previous provision in 75.28 (1) giving a minor the right to bring action at any time during his minority and within one year thereafter, and made such amendments apply retroactively, but left untouched the previous provision in 75.28 (1) that the limitation period of 75.27 should not apply where the land was redeemed as provided by law, 75.27, as amended by such ch. 391, had no application and did not bar an action to recover lands owned

by a minor, which were deeded to the defendant county by tax deed in 1936 for the tax sale of 1932, and by further deed in 1940 for the tax sale of 1933, and by deed of other tracts in 1943 for the tax sale of 1935, and in respect to which lands thus sold for delinquent taxes such owner had the right to redeem at any time during his minority and within one year thereafter under 75.03 as construed herein, and in respect to which such owner, who became of age in November, 1950, tendered to the county in May, 1951, all delinquent taxes, interest, penalties and fees necessary for redemption, and demanded the redemption of such lands. *Swanke v. Oneida County*, 265 W 92, 60 NW (2d) 756, 62 NW (2d) 7.

The fact, that the defendant county held tax deeds, instead of tax certificates, would not bar a minor owner of the land from redeeming the same within one year after becoming of age. *Swanke v. Oneida County*, 265 W 92, 60 NW (2d) 756, 62 NW (2d) 7.

Right of minors to redeem land sold for nonpayment of taxes is limited by (1) to the interest of said minors in such land. 44 Atty. Gen. 93.

**75.04 Redemption receipt and entries.** Upon the redemption of any lands sold for taxes by payment to the county treasurer, such treasurer shall execute to the person so redeeming a receipt specifying therein the name of the purchaser, the land redeemed and the amount of the redemption money paid on each parcel separately; and such treasurer shall also enter on the sale list kept by him the name of the person redeeming, the sum paid therefor, and the time when paid; but the county treasurer shall not be required to include in the same receipt of redemption lands sold in different years.

**75.05 Disposition of redemption money.** All tax certificate redemption money shall, after the expiration of six years from the date of such redemption of the property, become a part of the general fund and be disbursed as other moneys belonging thereto. The legal holder of any tax sale certificate which has been redeemed may thereafter present the same to the county treasurer who shall pay to such person the amount paid upon such redemption.

**75.06 Payment on lost certificates.** Whenever any person claiming to be the owner of any certificate given by the county treasurer for lands sold for taxes shall have lost the same, or the same shall be wrongfully detained from him and the land therein described shall have been redeemed, he may exhibit to the county treasurer evidence of such ownership, loss or detention; and upon his making it satisfactorily appear to such treasurer that he is such owner and that the same is lost or wrongfully detained, and executing to such treasurer a bond with sufficient sureties, to be approved by the treasurer, conditioned that he will refund such redemption money, with eight per cent interest thereon if any other person shall thereafter show his right thereto, such treasurer shall pay such redemption money to such person.

**75.07 Redemption notices; publication.** (1) Each county treasurer shall, at least 6 and not more than 10 months before the expiration of the time limited for redeeming lands sold as aforesaid, cause to be published once a week for 2 successive weeks in a newspaper printed in the county in which said lands are located, a list of all unredeemed lands, specifying each tract or lot, the name of the person to whom assessed, if to any, and the amount of taxes, charges and interest, calculated to the last day of redemption, due on each parcel, together with a notice that unless such lands be redeemed on or before the day limited therefor, specifying the same, they will be conveyed to the purchaser; but it shall not be lawful for any such treasurer to publish any such list and notice in any newspaper in which the county treasurer is prohibited from publishing the notice he is required by s. 74.33 to cause to be published. The county treasurer, for the purpose of such list, may condense such descriptions when such condensed description will reasonably describe the premises.

(2) Before publishing such list such treasurer shall carefully compare the same with his record of lands on which the taxes have been returned as delinquent and with such treasurer's list of the same lands in his book of sales, and if upon such examination there be found any omission or erroneous description in said list, such parcel of land in the description of which the omission or error shall occur shall not be advertised for redemption, but he shall cancel the certificate of sale of said parcel and shall readvertise and sell the same at the next ensuing sale of land for unpaid taxes; provided, however, that if the number of the description in the lists of lands to be advertised for redemption by the county treasurer shall exceed 3,000, he shall then let by contract the publication of such list to the lowest bidder upon a notice, written or printed, to be delivered to and

left with the publisher or one of the publishers of each newspaper printed as aforesaid, at least 10 days prior to the time at which such contract shall be let; and any county treasurer who shall wilfully refuse or neglect to perform any duty required by this section or who shall keep back and not report any unredeemed lands for the purpose of evading its provisions shall forfeit the full amount of the penalty of his official bond, one half of which, when collected, shall be paid to the person prosecuting therefor and the residue into the treasury of the county for the use of the school fund; provided further, that no county treasurer shall be liable to any penalty for causing such publication to be made in a weekly newspaper published in such county for the length of time hereinbefore named prior to the date of his notice, when by reason of accident or other cause more than one week has intervened between the dates of the actual issue of such newspaper to subscribers, if such delay at any one time shall not have exceeded 3 days; but every such newspaper, for the purpose of this section shall be deemed to have been regularly published once in each week as hereinbefore provided.

**History:** 1957 c. 699.

**Cross Reference:** As to redemption period, see 74.46.

**75.09 Notice, how posted.** If no newspaper be published in such county the county treasurer shall also, at least three months previous to the time limited for the redemption of any lands sold for taxes, cause to be posted up copies of the list and notice specified in the preceding section in at least four public places in his county, one of which copies shall be posted up in some conspicuous place in his office.

**75.10 Mistake in notice.** Whenever, by mistake or otherwise, such treasurer neglects or fails to include in his published list any such tract or tracts of land or to publish such list in accordance with the requirements of law, the same may be published at any time within 2 years after the expiration of 5 years as to tax certificates which antedate 1945, 4 years and 6 months for the 1945 tax certificates, 4 years for the 1946 tax certificates, 3 years and 6 months for the 1947 tax certificates, and thereafter 3 years; such publication shall be made in the same manner and for the same time as prescribed in the preceding sections, and such treasurer shall specify in his notice accompanying such published list when the time for making redemption of such lands from such sale will expire, which time shall not be less than 6 nor more than 10 months from the expiration of the full 2 weeks required for the aforesaid publication and all deeds made upon such tracts of land after the expiration of 5 years as to tax certificates which antedate 1945, 4 years and 6 months for the 1945 tax certificates, 4 years for the 1946 tax certificates, 3 years and 6 months for the 1947 tax certificates, and thereafter 3 years, shall after the expiration of such extended period of redemption, be as valid and effectual as if such publication had been made at the time required in such section.

**75.11 Compensation of printer.** (1) The printer who shall publish the list and notice of the time when the redemption of land sold for the nonpayment of taxes will expire shall receive compensation therefor the same as is provided for legal notices under section 331.25, except that when the same is published under contract, as provided by law, he shall receive the compensation fixed by such contract and no more.

**75.12 Deed, notice of application for.** (1) No tax deed shall be issued on any lot or tract of land which has been or shall hereafter be sold for the nonpayment of taxes, unless a written notice of application for tax deed shall have been served upon the owner, or one of the owners of record in the office of register of deeds of the county wherein the land is situated. If such lot or tract be improved by a dwelling house, or building used for business purposes, or a building used for agricultural purposes, and in any of said cases, such building has been actually occupied for the purpose specified for 30 days immediately prior to the date of service of the notice of application for tax deed, or if such lot or tract of land has been occupied and cultivated for agricultural purposes for 30 days within the period of 6 months immediately prior to the date of service of the notice of application for the tax deed, then notice of application for tax deed shall be served upon the occupant or one of the occupants thereof. If the records of the office of register of deeds in the county where such land is situated show that such lot or tract of land is incumbered by an unsatisfied mortgage or mortgages, such notice of application for tax deed shall be served upon at least one of the mortgagees in each such mortgage, or upon the last assignee or one of the last assignees of each such mortgage, if the assignment is recorded.

(2) Such notice shall state the name of the owner and holder of the tax sale certificate, and the date thereof, the description of the lands involved, the amount for which the lands were sold and that such amount will bear interest as provided by law, and shall give notice that after the expiration of 3 months from the date of service of such notice a tax deed will be applied for. Every notice served upon an occupant shall contain a

statement of the language of section 234.18. A notice of application for a tax deed shall not be served earlier than 88 days prior to the earliest date on which the holder of a tax certificate is by its terms entitled to a deed. The owner and holder of such tax sale certificate may include in said notice all the certificates he holds upon the same tract of land which are eligible for application for tax deed.

(3) Such notice of application for tax deed may be served by the owner and holder of any tax sale certificate sold by any county treasurer or by any city treasurer authorized by law to sell lands for nonpayment of city taxes or assessments, or by any person acting for such owner and holder. Such notice shall be served in the manner that service of a summons in a court of record is made, or by registered mail, with return receipt of the addressee only demanded. In the event that such notice cannot be given by use of either of the foregoing methods, the owner and holder of said tax sale certificate or his authorized agent shall make an affidavit setting forth the effort to make such service, the inability to do so, and shall file such affidavit with the county clerk as to county tax sale certificates, or in cities authorized by law to sell lands for nonpayment of city taxes or assessments with the city treasurer as to such city tax sale certificates. In such cases the notice hereinabove provided shall be published by such owner and holder once a week for 3 successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation published in the county wherein such lands are located, or if there be none then in a newspaper published in an adjoining county. If there is no newspaper in the same or an adjoining county then such notice shall be published in the official state paper. The affidavit of the owner and holder of the tax sale certificate as to inability to secure service personally or by registered mail, together with proof of publication of the notice, shall be deemed completed service of the notice of application for tax deed.

(4) Before such tax deed shall be issued, proof of service, or the returned registered mail receipt, or proof of publication of the notice of application for tax deed shall be filed with the officer authorized by law to issue the same, and a copy of such proof of service, returned registered mail receipt, or proof of publication with evidence of the cost thereof shall be filed with the county treasurer as to county tax sale certificates and with such city treasurer as to city tax sale certificates. After such copies shall have been filed with the county treasurer or with such treasurer it shall be necessary to pay, in order to redeem such lot or tract of land, or any part or interest therein, in addition to the redemption value of the tax sale certificates, the sum of \$1.50 for each person served with such notice plus the cost of publication of the notice, if any. If there is no occupant of such lands as hereinbefore defined, the applicant for tax deed shall file an affidavit to that effect with the officer authorized by law to issue the tax deed.

(5) The grantee in any tax deed, his heirs or assigns, or its successors or assigns, shall never recover or be entitled to receive from any county or city of the first class the amount due on any tax sale certificate or certificates upon which such deed is issued, or any part thereof, if such deed be set aside or declared void solely upon the ground that the notice required by this section was not duly served or that the proof of such service was insufficient, or that the affidavit as to nonoccupancy was not duly made or was insufficient.

(6) No tax deed shall be taken upon any notice of application therefor after one year from the last date of service of such notice.

(7) This section shall supersede all provisions of law, including the provisions of any city charter, which are in conflict with it.

Where the owner of land sold for taxes died leaving several heirs but no probate proceedings or proceedings for certificate of heirship were had, so that there was no living owner of record on whom notice of application for tax deed could be served either personally or by registered mail, this section required that notice of application for tax deed be given by publication in a newspaper, and merely personal service of such notice on an heir-occupant of the land would be insufficient as against the other heirs. *Carroll v. Richland County*, 264 W 96, 58 NW (2d) 434.

Where 2 or more persons own a parcel of land as a partnership, as tenants in common, or in joint tenancy, notice of application for tax deed need be served only on one of them. 39 Atty. Gen. 534.

Where land is owned of record by 2 persons as tenants in common, reserved timber

and pasture rights thereon are owned of record in joint tenancy, and the land is subject to a recorded easement, service of notice of application for tax deed on one of the owners of the fee is sufficient compliance with requirement that it be served "upon the owner, or one of the owners of record." 39 Atty. Gen. 595.

Recording of a mortgage subsequent to the service of notice of application for tax deed given in full accordance with this section does not invalidate a tax deed taken thereon. 41 Atty. Gen. 253.

Where the owner of record title to tax delinquent lands holds title subject to right of re-entry for a condition which has been broken, the holder of the right of re-entry is not the owner of record for the purpose of service of notice of application for tax deed. 44 Atty. Gen. 244.

**75.13 Curative act.** If a proper affidavit of service of notice of land sold for taxes or a proper proof of nonoccupancy, in due form, as provided in section 75.12, has heretofore been filed either with the county clerk or with the county treasurer, the fact that such affidavit of service of notice or affidavit of nonoccupancy or such proof has not been otherwise filed shall not, after 6 months after April 2, 1917, be alleged or raised in any

action or proceeding attacking or questioning the title of the person claiming an interest in said land growing out of the certificate of sale set forth in such notice or proof.

**75.14 Deeds, execution of; rights under; evidence.** (1) If any land sold for non-payment of taxes shall not be redeemed as aforesaid the city or village treasurer or county clerk shall, after the expiration of the time prescribed by law for the redemption thereof, on presentation to him of the certificate of such sale and proof of service of notice, execute in the name of the state and of his city, village or county, as such officer thereof, under his hand and the seal of the city, village or county, to the purchaser, his heirs or assigns, a deed of the land so remaining unredeemed, and shall acknowledge the same which shall vest in the grantee an absolute estate in fee simple in such land subject, however, to all unpaid taxes and charges which are a lien thereon and to recorded restrictions and redemption as provided in this chapter; and such deed duly witnessed and acknowledged shall be presumptive evidence of the regularity of all the proceedings, from the valuation of the land by the assessor up to and including the execution of the deed, and may be recorded with the like effect as other conveyances of land.

(2) The county clerk shall not issue a deed of any parcel of land until by carefully comparing the advertised list of the same for redemption with the treasurer's list of said lands in his book of sales he shall find that the description of such parcel of land so to be conveyed has been correctly and fully published, in such advertised list of redemptions; and if upon such examination the county clerk shall find any error or omission in any such advertised description he shall enter opposite the description of said land in his book of sales a statement of the fact of such error or omission. If the description of said land in the book of sales is in error, the county board shall cause such certificate to be canceled and direct the county treasurer to correct the description thereof and resell the same at the next ensuing sale of lands for unpaid taxes. If the error or omission is in only the advertised list of redemptions, the county treasurer shall correct and readvertise the same for redemption in the next such publication and the period of redemption shall be extended thereby an additional year.

(3) Whenever an application for a tax deed is made pursuant to law to the county clerk of any county having a population of five hundred thousand or more inhabitants, such county clerk before issuing any such tax deed conveying title to the lands or parts of lands described in such application shall require the applicant or applicants, excepting such county and any city authorized by law to sell its own delinquent taxes or assessments at public auction, to produce and submit proof, showing that all unredeemed delinquent general or special tax certificates of a tax levy year the same or prior to the tax levy year of the tax certificate on which such applicant is applying for a tax deed upon taxes or assessments theretofore assessed and levied against such lands or parts of lands by any city located in such county and by law authorized to sell its own delinquent taxes or assessments at public auction, upon which the time limitations of section 75.20 shall not have expired, have been purchased by and the tax certificates therefor assigned to the applicant for such tax deed or purchased by and assigned to some other person. Whenever an application for a tax deed is made pursuant to law to the city treasurer of any city within such county authorized by law to sell lands for the nonpayment of city taxes or assessments, such city treasurer before issuing any such tax deed conveying title to the lands or parts of lands described in such application shall require the applicant or applicants, excepting such city or the county within which such city is located, to produce and submit proof, showing that all unredeemed delinquent general or special state and county tax or county special assessment tax sale certificates of a tax levy year the same or prior to the tax levy year of the tax certificate on which such applicant is applying for a tax deed upon taxes or assessments theretofore assessed and levied against such lands or parts of lands by said county, upon which the time limitations of section 75.20 shall not have expired, have been purchased by and the tax certificates therefor assigned to the applicant for such tax deed or purchased by and assigned to some other person.

(4) Whenever a deed in the chain of title shall contain valid and enforceable restrictions and covenants running with the land, as hereinafter defined and limited, said restrictions and covenants shall survive and be enforceable after the issuance of a tax deed or a deed upon foreclosure of tax certificate to the same extent that they would be enforceable against a voluntary grantee of the owner of the title immediately prior to the delivery of the tax deed. This subsection shall apply to the usual restrictions and covenants limiting the use of property, the type, character and location of building, covenants against nuisances and what the former parties deemed to be undesirable conditions, in, upon and about the property, covenants to contribute to the cost of maintaining private roads, and other similar restrictions and covenants; but this subsection shall not protect covenants creating any debt or lien against or upon the property, or that will require the grantee to expend money for any purpose, except such as may require said

grantee to keep the premises in sanitary or slightly condition, contribute to the cost of maintaining private roads, or to abate nuisances or undesirable conditions. Provided that while any county is the owner of lands so acquired it shall not be required to expend any money to keep the premises in sanitary or slightly condition or to contribute to the cost of maintaining private roads or to abate nuisances or undesirable conditions, but its successors in title shall be subject thereto and to covenants and restrictions as provided in this section. Any rights the former owner had to enforce the restrictions and covenants to which this subsection is applicable against the grantor and other parties owning property subject to such restrictions and covenants, except forfeitures, right of re-entry, or reverter, shall likewise survive to the grantee in said tax deed or deed upon foreclosure of tax certificate, and to his or its heirs, successors and assigns.

**History:** 1951 c. 522; 1957 c. 699.

The strength of a tax deed depends on whether all the requirements of law governing a sale of real property for taxes have been fully complied with, and a tax deed is not valid if any act required by law, such as a proper notice of application for tax deed, is omitted. Where an heir to land sold for taxes acquiesced in the tax sale and was in possession of the land under a lease from the county wherein he stated that the land was owned by the county, which had taken a tax deed, and thereafter certain third parties purchased the premises from the county without any opposition of record from him, such heir-occupant, who had acquired the interests of the other heirs in the meantime, was estopped to assert that the tax sale was contrary to statute and that the tax deed was void. *Carroll v. Richland County*, 264 W 96, 58 NW (2d) 434.

The county board has power to include reservations of minerals, oil and gas in conveyances of county lands acquired by tax deed. 38 Atty. Gen. 639.

**75.145 Correction of description by action.** Any tax deed issued by a county or a city of the first class containing an incomplete, indefinite or incorrect real estate description, and which description follows that set forth in the tax certificate upon which such tax deed issued, may be corrected in an action brought in the circuit court in the same manner as actions for the reformation of instruments. Such deed so corrected shall be valid as of the date of the first issue.

**75.15 Deed on lost certificate.** Whenever any certificate given by the county treasurer for lands sold for taxes shall be lost or wrongfully withheld from the owner and such land shall not have been redeemed the county board may receive evidence of such loss or wrongful detention, and on satisfactory proof of the fact may cause a deed as aforesaid to be executed to such person as may appear to them to be the rightful owner of such certificate of the lands described therein; but no such deed, if wrongfully or improperly granted, shall be binding on the county in respect to any of its covenants, nor shall it vest any right, title or interest in the grantee or his assigns.

**75.16 Deed, by whom executed; form.** All deeds of lands sold for the nonpayment of taxes hereafter executed shall be executed by the proper officer authorized by law to execute the same in the name of the state of Wisconsin, and of the proper county, city or village as the grantors therein, and shall be substantially in the following or other equivalent form:

To all to whom these presents shall come, greeting:

Whereas, . . . . . (or assignee of . . . . .) has deposited in the office of the county clerk of the county of . . . . , in the state of Wisconsin, a certificate (or certificates) of the (here name the officer making the sale) of said county, whereby it appears, as the fact is, that the following described piece (or pieces) or parcel (or parcels) of land lying and being situated in the county of . . . . , to wit: (Here describe the lands) was (or were), for the nonpayment of taxes, sold by the (here name the officer making the sale) at public auction at . . . . , in the county of . . . . , on the . . . . day of . . . . , in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and . . . . , to the said . . . . . for the sum of . . . . dollars and . . . . cents, in the whole, which sum was the amount of taxes assessed and due and unpaid on said tract (or several tracts) of land, together with the costs and charges of such sale due therewith at the time of making such sale, the whole of which sum of money has been paid by the aforesaid purchaser (or purchasers); and whereas it further appears, as the fact is, that the owner (or owners) or claimant (or claimants) of said land has (or have) not redeemed from said sale the lands which were sold as aforesaid, and said lands are now unredeemed from such sale, whereby said described lands have become forfeited and the said purchaser, his (her or their) heirs or assigns is (or are) entitled to a conveyance thereof:

Now, therefore, know all men by these presents that the county of . . . . , in said state, and the state of Wisconsin, in consideration of the said money aforesaid and the premises, and in conformity to law, have given and hereby do give, grant and convey the tract (or several tracts) of land above described, together with the hereditaments and appurtenances, to the said . . . . . and to his (or her or their) heirs and assigns, to their sole use and benefit forever.

In testimony whereof, I, . . . . ., the (here designate the officer) of the county of . . . . ., have executed this deed pursuant to and in virtue of the authority in me vested by the statutes of the state of Wisconsin, and for and on behalf of said state and the county of . . . . . aforesaid, and have hereunto subscribed my name officially and affixed the seal of the said . . . . . (name it), at . . . . . in said county of . . . . ., this . . . . . day of . . . . ., in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and . . . . .

[L. s.]

A. B.

(Here give official designation.)

Done in presence of

. . . . .

. . . . .

**75.17 Execution of tax deeds by city.** After February 22, 1859, in every conveyance of land for nonpayment of taxes due to any city under the law authorizing it to assess and collect taxes, the deed shall conform as near as may be to the form prescribed by section 75.16; shall be executed in the name of the state of Wisconsin and in the name of such city as grantor, and shall be sealed with the corporate seal of the city.

**75.18 New deeds in place of void ones.** When any deed or instrument in writing intended to be a deed shall have been made for the nonpayment of taxes no other deed shall be issued or made therefor to any person except upon the following conditions: If such taxes shall remain unpaid and such deed shall be void for noncompliance with section 75.12, or informal and insufficient, and the grantee therein named, his heirs or assigns shall, within three years after the recording thereof and before any other deed upon a subsequent sale of the same land for the nonpayment of taxes shall have been issued to some other person, present such void, informal or insufficient deed or a certified copy of the record thereof together with sufficient proof that he is such grantee, heir or assignee, and that he has not conveyed such land the proper county clerk or other proper officer shall execute to such grantee, his heir or assignee another deed of said land which shall recite the fact of the issuing of such void, informal or insufficient deed, with a statement of the volume and page wherein recorded and that the taxes on account of the nonpayment of which it was issued remain unpaid; and such deed duly acknowledged and recorded shall be presumptive evidence of title to the land therein described; but no such new deed shall be issued until notice of the application therefor shall be published in a newspaper printed in the county wherein such lands are situated or until personal service of such notice upon all persons interested in such lands, at least thirty days before such deed shall be issued; and the issuing of such new deed shall not extend in favor of the grantee therein, or his heirs or assignees the limitation which would have begun to run against him on such first deed if it had not been void, informal or insufficient.

**75.19 Foreclosure of certificates.** The holder of any tax certificate may, at his option, in lieu of taking a tax deed, at any time after 5 years as to tax certificates which antedate 1945, 4 years and 6 months for the 1945 tax certificates, 4 years for the 1946 tax certificates, 3 years and 6 months for the 1947 tax certificates, and thereafter 3 years from the date of such certificate, and before he would be debarred from demanding a tax deed thereon, foreclose the same by action as in a case of a mortgage upon real estate. The holder of any tax certificate may in any case involving the right of redemption or interest of any minor, idiot or insane person, after a tax deed has been issued as provided in chapter 75, foreclose the right of redemption or interest of such minor, idiot or insane person. In such action such minor, idiot or insane person must appear by guardian ad litem, and his general guardian, if he has one, shall be joined as a party defendant. All the laws and rules of practice relating to the foreclosure of mortgages, as to the persons necessary and proper to be made parties, as to pleading and evidence, the judgment of foreclosure and sale thereunder, the right of the plaintiff to be subrogated to the benefits of all liens upon the premises by him necessarily satisfied in order to save the lien of his certificate, the right of the defendants or any of them, to redeem the premises at any time before sale, and as to costs and disbursements, including the necessary expenses for an abstract of title, shall, so far as they are applicable, prevail in such actions; provided, that when costs are allowed to the plaintiff, such costs, exclusive of disbursements, shall be discretionary with the court, but shall not exceed the amount of the face of the certificate or certificates embraced in such action, and such costs when allowed, shall be an additional lien upon the property described in such certificates, provided further, that the defendant may in all cases within the time limited by law for answering the complaint, execute and deliver to the plaintiff or his attorney a quitclaim deed of the lands described in the complaint, conveying all the right, title and interest of such defendant at the time of the commencement of the suit; or may, within such time, either after having delivered such deed or without such delivery, answer disclaiming any title



to the lands in question at the time of the commencement of the suit, in either of which cases the plaintiff shall not recover costs personally against any such defendant who quitclaims as aforesaid or who shall establish such disclaimer upon the trial of such action. The plaintiff in such action may include in one action, all the certificates he holds upon the same tract of land; and the sale in such actions shall be conducted, certificates thereon made and filed, the report made and confirmed and a deed thereon executed and delivered, in like manner and with like effect as in case of actions for foreclosure of mortgages.

**75.20 Limitations on certificates and issue of deeds; life of tax certificate liens.**

(1) DEFINITIONS. Wherever used in this section:

(a) The words "tax certificate" or "tax certificates" shall mean the tax sale certificate which is issued evidencing the sale of land for delinquent taxes.

(b) "County" shall include "city of the first class" and "county treasurer" shall include "treasurer of a city of the first class."

(2) TAX CERTIFICATES DATED IN 1946 AND THEREAFTER. Tax certificates dated in 1946 and thereafter shall be void after 11 years following December 31 of the year in which such certificates were dated.

(3) TAX CERTIFICATES HELD IN TRUST DATED IN THE YEARS 1939 THROUGH 1945. Tax certificates issued in the name of the county, but which are held by the county treasurer in trust for the benefit of an owner other than the county, dated in 1939 through 1945, shall be void after 6 years from date of issue.

(4) CERTIFICATES HELD BY PRIVATE PERSONS DATED IN YEARS 1939 THROUGH 1945. Tax certificates which were issued at tax sale to a private person in the years 1939 through 1945 shall be void after 6 years from the date of such tax certificates.

(5) MUNICIPALLY OWNED CERTIFICATES DATED IN 1930 THROUGH 1945. Tax certificates issued to and owned by any county or issued to and owned by any town, city or village, dated in 1930 through 1945, shall be void after 15 years from date of issue.

(6) TAX CERTIFICATES IN WHICH EITHER OR BOTH COUNTY AND TAXING DISTRICT HAVE AN EQUITY PRIOR TO MAY 15, 1945. Tax certificates dated in 1945 or prior thereto, representing delinquent taxes of a tax levy year in which there was an excess delinquent return, special assessments originally returned for credit and later charged back to the town, city or village of origin, and delinquent metropolitan sewerage taxes levied pursuant to section 59.96, or in which any equity exists pursuant to section 74.03 (9) or 74.031 (11), shall be void after 15 years from date of issue.

(7) LIEN OF TAX CERTIFICATES ASSIGNED PRIOR TO MAY 15, 1945, UNCHANGED. Tax certificates which prior to May 15, 1945 were acquired by assignment by private persons or by any municipality, town, farm drainage or drainage district, authorized by law to acquire ownership of tax certificates, shall be void after 6 years from the date of the assignment of such tax certificate by the county, provided that in any event the lien of any such tax certificate shall be void after 15 years from its date.

(8) MUNICIPALLY OWNED TAX CERTIFICATES DATED IN 1945 AND PRIOR THERETO, ASSIGNED AFTER MAY 15, 1945. Tax certificates dated in 1945 or prior thereto, originally issued to and owned by a county or municipality, which subsequent to May 15, 1945, shall be acquired by assignment by private persons or by any municipality, farm drainage, or drainage district, authorized by law to acquire ownership of tax certificates, shall become void after 6 years from the date of the assignment of such tax certificates by the county, provided that in any event the lien of any such tax certificate shall be void after 15 years from its date.

(8a) GENERAL LIMITATION. Tax certificates dated prior to 1946, and for which no other limitation is provided by this section, shall be void after 15 years from their date.

(9) COUNTY TREASURER TO CANCEL ALL OUTLAWED TAXES. No deed shall be issued or action commenced on any tax certificate whatever after it shall have become void by virtue of the statute of limitations provided in this section. The interest in the land represented by such certificate shall terminate upon the last date upon which a deed could have been issued thereon, or an action could have been commenced thereon if no summons and complaint was served and filed prior to such date. The county treasurer shall cancel all tax certificates which have become void by limitation including all tax certificates which became void by operation of section 75.20, statutes of 1943, by May 15, 1945, and shall make an entry in his record of unredeemed tax sales evidencing such cancellation. As to tax certificates not in his possession which have become void, the county treasurer shall cancel the same on his record of unredeemed tax sale certificates and such cancellation on such record shall have the same force and effect as though the cancellation had been made upon such tax sale certificates.

(9a) **CERTIFICATION OF CANCELLATION TO LOCAL TREASURER.** Whenever the county treasurer shall cancel a tax certificate which has become void by virtue of any statutes of limitation he shall within 30 days thereafter in writing certify such cancellation to the proper town, city or village treasurer who shall make entry thereof in his records. Such cancellation need not be so certified in cases where the county has settled in full with the town, city or village at tax settlement date.

(10) **STAY BY INJUNCTION NOT PART OF LIMITATION.** When the issuing of a deed on a tax certificate or certificates or the commencement of an action thereon shall be stayed by injunction, the time of the continuance of such injunction shall not be a part of the time hereinabove limited in this section as the life of a tax certificate.

**Cross Reference:** See 74.09 for authority of county treasurer to destroy duplicate receipts and stub books.

**75.21 Limitation on special certificates.** From and after 6 years from the date of any street commissioner's certificate or comptroller's certificate or other special tax certificate issued or to be issued by the proper officer or officers of any city, town or village in this state, and denoting a charge against any lot or parcel of land in such city, town or village for a special tax or assessment thereon, no action, either at law or in equity, shall be maintained on such certificate, but certificates of sale of lands for nonpayment of such special taxes or assessments shall not be limited by section 75.21 but the limitations provided by section 75.20 shall be applicable thereto.

**75.22 Tax sales; void; refund; immaterial errors.** If after the sale or conveyance of any lands sold for the nonpayment of taxes and within the time hereinafter prescribed it shall be discovered that the sale or the certificate issued thereon was invalid, the county board shall make an order, briefly stating the reason therefor, directing that the money paid for such certificate on the sale, and all subsequent charges thereon, and all subsequent taxes paid on the lands described therein by the purchaser or his assigns, be refunded with interest to such purchaser or his assigns, upon the delivery of the certificate or deed to be canceled; and if the county treasurer shall, in pursuance of such order, offer to the person entitled thereto his money as aforesaid, and he shall refuse to receive the same and cancel the certificate or deed, he shall not be entitled to receive any interest on the money so paid by him after the day of such offer and refusal; nor shall any recovery ever be otherwise had against the county on such deed or certificate. But no sale, certificate, or conveyance shall be deemed invalid within the meaning of this section by reason of any mistake or irregularity in any of the tax proceedings not affecting the groundwork of the tax; nor shall any county be liable to pay or refund any moneys by reason of any such mistake or irregularity.

**75.23 Canceled deeds, certificates of county clerk.** Whenever the county board shall order the cancellation of any tax deed, the county clerk shall furnish to the owner of the lands described in such deed, upon request therefor, a certificate in writing, executed under his hand and official seal, stating the fact of such cancellation, the date thereof, the description of the lands as to which such deed is canceled, the date of such deed, the date of the sale upon which such deed is based and the reason for such cancellation. Such certificate may be recorded in the office of the register of deeds of the county where the lands therein described are located, and such record shall be prima facie evidence of the facts therein stated and of the cancellation of the tax deed therein mentioned as to the lands therein described.

**75.24 Limitation, claims under illegal deed or certificate.** Every action brought or claim presented against any county or other municipal corporation for the recovery of any sum of money on account of any defective or void tax certificate or tax deed made or issued by any such county or municipality shall be commenced or presented during the life of such tax certificates on which such deed was issued in accordance with the limitations as provided in section 75.20; and whenever an action relating to the validity of a tax certificate or tax deed shall have been commenced within the time above limited and a final judgment shall not be rendered in such action until after the expiration of the time so limited, in such case an action may be commenced or claim presented on account of such certificate or deed within one year after final judgment declaring the same void.

**75.25 Lien of reassessed tax.** (1) If the county board, on making an order directing the refunding of money on account of the invalidity of any tax certificate or tax deed, shall be satisfied that the lands described in such certificate or deed were justly taxable for such tax or some portion thereof; or, when the treasurer shall have withheld from sale any delinquent lands under the provisions of section 74.39, they shall be satisfied that such lands were justly taxable for such tax or some portion thereof, they shall fix the amount of such tax justly chargeable thereon on each parcel thereof, and direct the same

to be assessed in the next assessment of county taxes, with interest thereon at the same rate that would have applied had the tax been collected before the tax sale or redeemed from the tax sale, from the time when such tax was due and payable to the end of the tax levy year in which such tax will be placed on the tax roll as a reassessment; and the county clerk, in his next apportionment of county taxes, shall charge the same as a special tax to the town, city or village in which such lands are situated, specifying the particular tract of land upon which the same are to be assessed and the amount chargeable to each parcel and the year when the original tax was assessed, and certify the same to the clerk of the proper town, city or village; and the clerk receiving such certificate shall enter the same on the tax roll accordingly. The lien of any tax reassessed as provided in this section shall attach to the land as of the date when such tax as originally levied became a lien and shall continue and constitute the lien of any tax sale certificate issued upon the sale of such lands for such reassessed tax. Such lien shall be superior to the lien of any tax sale certificate issued upon the sale of such land dated after the date of the lien of such reassessed tax but prior to the date of the tax sale certificate issued upon the sale of such land for such reassessed tax.

(2) Whenever the county board cancels a defective or void tax certificate or tax deed, or whenever the county treasurer shall have withheld from sale any delinquent lands under the provision of section 74.39, and such lands cannot be justly taxed for the item in question, the county clerk shall charge the respective town, city or village wherein such lands are situated in his next apportionment of county taxes with the amount of the refund if any occasioned by the invalidity of such tax certificate or tax deed. When the tax certificate or tax deed so canceled is owned and held by the county or the treasurer shall have withheld from sale any delinquent lands pursuant to section 74.39, such charge shall be in the amount of the tax without interest.

**75.26 Limitation.** (1) **GRANTEE IN DEED.** No action shall be maintained by the grantee or any one claiming under him to recover the possession of any land or any interest therein which shall have been conveyed by deed for the nonpayment of taxes unless such action shall be brought within three years next after the date of the execution of such deed; or if such land demanded shall be, when so conveyed, vacant and unoccupied and so remain, unless such action be brought within three years next after the date of the recording of such deed, or unless such grantee or those claiming under him shall have been in actual, not constructive, possession of the land so demanded for three successive years during the five years next after the recording of such deed; provided, however, that if the former owner takes possession of any such land at any time within three months of the expiration of three years from the date of the execution of such deed, then and in such case the grantee in such tax deed or those claiming under him may bring and maintain an action to recover possession of said land at any time within three months next after the expiration of said three years.

(2) **TAX DEED VOID, WHEN.** Whenever the original owner, or any one claiming under him, of lands which have been conveyed by deed for the nonpayment of taxes, shall continue to pay the taxes upon such lands, and shall pay the taxes assessed against said lands continuously for five years next after the execution of such tax deed, without actual notice of the existence of such tax deed, said tax deed shall be void and of no effect.

This section operated to bar the grantee of a tax-deed grantee, neither of whom was ever in actual possession of the premises, from bringing an action, more than 3 years after such date, to recover the possession of a portion of the premises from parties in possession of such portion, who were not the former owners thereof within the meaning of this section but had occupied it adversely for more than 20 years as the inclosed boundary of their property and thereby satisfied the requirements for possession prescribed in 75.31 and 330.07. *Johnson v. Pofahl*, 264 W 215, 53 NW (2d) 648.

**75.27 Limitation on former owner.** No action shall be maintained by the former owner or any person claiming under him to recover the possession of any land or any interest therein which shall have been conveyed by deed for the nonpayment of taxes or to avoid such deed against any person claiming under such deed unless such action shall be brought within 3 years next after the recording of such deed. Whenever any such action shall be commenced upon any tax deed heretofore or hereafter issued after the expiration of 3 years from the date of the recording of such deed, such deed, if executed substantially in the form prescribed by law for the execution of tax deeds, shall be conclusive evidence of the existence and legality of all proceedings from and including the assessment of the property for taxation up to and including the execution of such deed.

See note to 75.03, citing *Swanke v. Oneida County*, 265 W 92, 60 NW (2d) 756, 62 NW (2d) 7.

**75.28 Application of all limitations.** (1) The limitation for bringing actions as provided in section 75.27 or any other limitation in favor of a tax deed or a tax certificate, except in case of actual possession founded on a tax deed, shall not apply where the taxes, for the nonpayment of which the land was sold and the tax deed executed, were paid

prior to the sale, or where the land was redeemed from the operation of such sale as provided by law or where the land was not liable to taxation; nor shall such limitation apply where a single tax deed only has been issued and the original owner has, before the issuance of such tax deed, paid all taxes levied against the land for the 3 years ensuing after the year for which the land was returned delinquent and sold, except as herein provided.

(2) The tax deed grantee or his assigns may, at any time after the tax deed is issued and recorded, serve a notice on the owner of record of the original title, stating that he holds a tax deed on the land of such original owner and giving a description of the land so deeded and a reference to the volume and page where such deed is recorded, which notice shall be served in the same manner as a summons in a court of record or by registered mail, addressed to such owner of record and proof of which service shall be filed in the office of the county clerk of the county in which the lands are situated. If the post-office address of the owner of record of the original title is unknown, such tax deed grantee, or his assigns, may, upon filing in the office of such county clerk his affidavit that he is unable, with due diligence, to make personal service of such notice or to ascertain the post-office address of such former owner, publish such notice in a newspaper published in the county where the land described in the tax deed is located, once a week for 6 successive weeks and proof of such publication shall be filed in the office of such county clerk.

(3) If such notice be served and filed or such notice published and proof of publication filed thirty days or more before the expiration of three years from the date of recording the tax deed, the limitation provided by section 75.27 shall apply. If such notice is not so served and filed, or published and proof filed, the limitation provided by said section 75.27 shall be extended until the expiration of thirty days from and after the day such notice is served and filed or published and proof filed. In any action brought by the original owner to set aside such tax deed after the service or publication and filing of the notice aforesaid, the original owner, in case he prevails, shall as a condition of relief pay to the tax deed claimant the sum of five dollars for each description and the costs of serving or publishing the aforesaid notice, in addition to all other costs and charges now provided for by law. The provisions of law regulating costs and charges for the service of a summons in a court of record shall apply to and govern the amount that may be charged for the service or publication of such notice.

See note to 75.03, citing *Swanke v. Oneida County*, 265 W 92, 60 NW (2d) 756, 62 NW (2d) 7.

**75.285 Action; condition precedent.** No action or proceeding shall be maintained by the former owner or any person claiming under him, based upon the invalidity of any tax certificate or tax deed due to the failure of the county treasurer heretofore or hereafter to publish or post any notice for the sale of delinquent taxes on land, unless within thirty days prior to the commencement of such action, tender shall be made to the owner of such tax certificate or tax deed, of the amount of the taxes, charges and interest due and the owner of such certificate or deed shall fail to release or transfer same. If the owner of any certificate or deed shall give notice in the manner prescribed in the preceding section and the original owner shall fail to redeem after a period of sixty days by depositing with the owner of such certificate or deed or the county treasurer, for the benefit of such tax certificate or tax deed owner, the amount of the taxes with interest and charges together with the costs of executing a release or transfer of such certificate or deed, then the limitation prescribed in section 75.27 shall apply and no action or proceeding herein referred to shall be maintained.

**75.29 Actions of ejectment, when barred.** No action to quiet title, remove a cloud on title, to cancel, annul or set aside any tax deed, nor of ejectment, trespass, waste or for other injury to land shall be brought as to lands purporting to be conveyed by tax deed void on its face after the expiration of three years from the time of the recording of such deed. Provided, that the limitation herein declared shall not apply unless the original owner or those claiming under him shall have failed to pay or redeem all the taxes levied upon such lands from the time of the levy of the tax for the nonpayment of which the tax deed was issued to the time of the recording of the tax deed, nor unless the grantee in the tax deed or those claiming under him shall have paid or redeemed all the taxes levied upon such lands for three successive years next after such recording.

**75.30 Action by original owner where deed void, when barred.** No action shall be brought by the original owner for the recovery of lands purporting to be conveyed for the nonpayment of taxes by a deed void on its face after the expiration of five years from the date of the recording of the tax deed, in cases where the grantee in the tax deed shall have taken actual possession of such land within two years after such recording and shall have actually and continuously maintained such possession to the end of such period of five years.

**75.31 "Possession" defined.** What shall constitute a possession of lands within the meaning of sections 75.26 to 75.30 and the extent of such possession shall be governed by the rules prescribed for determining an adverse possession by a person claiming title founded upon a written instrument.

See note to 75.26, citing *Johnson v. Pofahl*, 264 W 215, 58 NW (2d) 648.

**75.32 Taxation and sale of lands held by counties.** Real property upon which the county holds any certificate of tax sale shall continue liable to taxation and to sale for unpaid taxes, and the county shall be the exclusive purchaser at the sale; but when a tax deed shall be issued to the county and it shall hold tax certificates of sale unredeemed on the same property for two successive years subsequent to the date of the sale on which such deed shall issue, including certificates of sale made prior to the passage of these statutes, such property shall thereafter be exempt from taxation until the same is sold by the county. The county clerk shall annually, before the first day of June, furnish to the assessors of each town a list of the lands in such town exempt under this section. Nothing in this section shall be so construed as to apply to lands owned by minors, idiots or insane persons.

**75.34 Sale of certificates by counties.** (1) The several county treasurers, when no order to the contrary shall have been made by the county board, shall sell and transfer, by assignment, any tax certificates held by the county to any person offering to purchase the same for the amount for which the land described therein was sold, with interest thereon at the rate specified in the certificates; but every such sale shall include all certificates in the hands of such treasurer on the same lands.

(2) No county board shall, at any session thereof, sell, convey or transfer, or order or direct the sale, conveyance or transfer of any tax certificates owned or held by the county at less than the face value thereof unless such board shall have previously directed the county clerk to give notice of their intention so to do by publication thereof for four successive weeks in some newspaper published in the English language in such county and having a general circulation therein, and such notice has been so given. Any and all sales, conveyances or transfers of such tax certificates made in violation of these provisions shall be null and void.

**75.35 Sale of tax certificates and tax deeded lands; purchase of adjacent lands.** (1) **DEFINITIONS.** The following terms, wherever used or referred to in this section shall have the following respective meanings, unless a different meaning clearly appears from the context:

(a) "Municipality" means any county, town, city, village or other municipal or quasi municipal corporation authorized by law to purchase tax certificates, take tax deeds or become the owner of tax deeded lands.

(b) "Tax deeded lands" means lands which have been acquired by a municipality through enforcement of the collection of delinquent taxes by tax deed, foreclosure of tax certificate, deed in lieu of tax deed or other means.

(2) **POWER OF MUNICIPALITY TO SELL TAX CERTIFICATES AND TAX DEEDED LANDS.** (a) Except as provided in s. 75.69, any municipality shall have the power to sell and convey its lands acquired in the enforcement of delinquent tax liens in such manner and upon such terms as its governing body may by ordinance or resolution determine, including without restriction because of enumeration, sale by land contract, or by quitclaim or warranty deed with mortgage from vendee to secure any unpaid balance of the purchase price. Such mortgage may be foreclosed in the same manner as any other mortgage. The title to lands conveyed by land contract shall remain in the municipality until fully paid for and in the event of default in such payment the municipality may foreclose the land contract with costs and reasonable attorney fees. When such land contract runs to a person or private corporation, the lands therein conveyed shall be placed on the tax roll and be subject to taxation the same as though absolute title thereto was vested in the purchaser under such land contract. Such purchaser shall be liable to pay all taxes against such land and in the event of failure to make such payment the municipality may pay the same and add the sum so paid to the amount due on the land contract.

(b) The governing body of any municipality authorized by law to acquire tax certificates may, by ordinance prescribing the terms of sale, authorize its clerk or treasurer to sell and assign such certificates, and in its discretion may restrict such sale or assignment to persons having an ownership interest in such lands or who own a tax certificate of a prior year thereon.

(c) Any conveyance by land contract or deed or satisfaction of mortgage shall be executed by the clerk of the municipality under his hand and the seal of such municipality.

(d) The governing body of any municipality may delegate its power to manage and sell tax deeded lands to a committee constituted of such personnel and in such manner

and compensated at such rate as such governing body may by ordinance determine, provided that the compensation and mileage of county board members serving on such committee shall be limited and restricted as provided in section 59.06 (2), or such governing body may delegate the power of acquisition, management and sale of tax deeded lands or any part of such power to such officer and departments of the municipality as such governing body may by ordinance determine. Such ordinance shall prescribe the policy to be followed in the acquisition, management and sale of tax deeded land and shall prescribe generally the powers and duties of such committee, officers, departments, employes and agents. The governing body is authorized to engage licensed real estate brokers and salesmen to assist in selling such lands and pay a commission for such service and to advertise such sale in such manner as it deems proper. Such governing body may appropriate such sums of money as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

(e) Any municipality acting either by its governing body or by delegated authority as provided in this section may sell and convey tax deeded lands to the former owner or owners thereof and such conveyance shall not operate to revive any tax certificate lien or any other lien whatsoever which was cut off and rendered void by the tax deed, foreclosure of tax certificate, deed in lieu of tax deed, or other means by which the municipality acquired title to such land, nor shall it revive the lien of any tax sale certificate or tax dated subsequently to the date on which such municipality acquired its title. The provisions of this paragraph shall operate retroactively upon any such sale or conveyance at any time heretofore made by any municipality. The enactment into statute law of the provisions of this paragraph shall not be deemed an expression of legislative intent that the prior common law of this state was otherwise than as herein provided.

(3) PREFERENCE TO FORMER OWNER TO REPURCHASE. The governing body of any municipality may, at its option, by ordinance provide that in the sale of tax deeded lands, the former owner who lost his title through delinquent tax collection enforcement procedure, or his heirs, may be given such preference in the right to purchase such lands as such ordinance shall provide. Such ordinance may provide that such sale be exempt from any or all provisions of section 75.69. Such ordinance shall not apply to tax deeded lands which have been improved for or dedicated to a public use by such municipality subsequent to its acquisition thereof.

(4) PURCHASE OF ADJACENT LANDS. A municipality may purchase lands adjacent to tax deeded lands in cases where the governing board of such municipality determines that such purchase will improve the salability of such tax deeded lands or will create access to streets or highways for lands lacking such access.

**Cross Reference:** See 59.07 (1) for power of county to direct county clerk to sell or contract for sale and conveyance of land owned by county, whether acquired by tax deed or otherwise.

A county is expressly authorized by (2) to convey tax deed lands by warranty deed. 39 Atty. Gen. 22.

**75.36 Tax deeds to county.** (1) DEFINITIONS. As used in this section, the following words or phrases shall have the meaning herein given.

(a) "Taken by tax deed" or "takes tax deed" shall be understood to include the taking of title by the county by a tax deed, or by means of quitclaim deeds from former owners obtained in the course of the county's effort to enforce the collection of delinquent taxes, or the lien of tax sale certificates outstanding against such lands, or by a combination of such methods.

(b) "Taxes" shall include general property taxes, metropolitan sewerage area or district taxes, special improvement assessments, and any other charge, any of which had resulted or may result in the issuance of a tax sale certificate, and shall also include any tax sale certificate issued on any of the foregoing, except as provided in section 77.04 and chapters 88 and 89.

(c) "Municipally owned" means the beneficial interest in a tax belonging to any municipal government, including town, city, village, metropolitan sewerage district or area, or county, which has the power to levy or compel the levying of taxes, derived by returning taxes for credit following which such taxes have been charged back by the county to the taxing district; or where taxes are returned in trust by the taxing district to the county for collection in cases wherein the work of improvement was wholly or partly paid for by the municipality or performed by its own labor; or cases wherein the municipality has an excess delinquency credit in tax roll of the particular year; or where the municipality has an equity in the current tax roll; or where the taxes are owned by the county.

(d) "Adversely owned taxes" are nonoutlawed taxes which are not municipally owned.

(2) WHEN AND HOW TAX DEED GIVEN. When any lands upon which the county holds a tax certificate shall not be redeemed as provided by law, the county clerk shall execute

to the county, in his name of office, a deed therefor, witnessed, sealed and acknowledged, and in like form as deeds to individuals; and such deeds shall have the same force and effect as deeds executed by such clerk to individuals for lands sold for the nonpayment of taxes; but no such deed shall be issued until the county board shall, by resolution, order the same.

(3) COUNTY LIABILITY ON TAX DEED LANDS. The county taking such tax deeds shall not be required to pay any delinquent or outstanding taxes on such land, the redemption value of any municipality owned outstanding tax sale certificates, or interest or charges, until the land is sold by the county, or in the case of lands registered as forest crop lands, until the forest crop is taken off, and if the sum realized on the sale of such lands or from the severance of such forest crop is distributed between the county and the municipalities in accordance with this section there shall be no further liability upon the county.

(4) TREASURER'S STATEMENT. As of the date when the county takes a tax deed, the county treasurer if demanded in writing by a local municipality having an interest in the taxes on the land, shall prepare a statement for each parcel of land described in such tax deed, showing the redemption amount of the tax certificates or taxes which are a lien thereon and appear on his records:

(a) Of the tax sale certificate upon which the deed was taken;

(b) Of every other municipally owned tax sale certificate and tax constituting a lien against such parcel of land not outlawed by sections 75.20 and 75.21 on the date of such deed;

(c) Of any other tax sale certificate or tax representing adversely owned taxes not cut off by the county's tax deed.

(5) LOCAL CLERK ENTITLED TO COPY. The county treasurer shall furnish a copy of such statement to the clerk of such municipality within 30 days after receipt of the demand.

(6) REDEMPTION OF ADVERSE TAX LIENS. The county may, at its option, at any time prior to sale by it of land acquired by it by tax deed, pay or redeem in whole or in part any nonoutlawed municipally or adversely owned taxes, the lien of which is dated the same or subsequent to the date of the tax certificate upon which the county's tax deed was taken. But the county at the time such land is sold by it shall redeem all adversely owned taxes, the lien of which is not cut off by the tax deed, and which are not outlawed at that time, unless such land is sold subject to such adversely owned taxes.

(7) DEDUCTIONS FROM SALE PRICE. When land acquired by the county by tax deed has been sold by the county, it may make the following deductions from the sale price in the order named:

(a) The county's actual expense for court actions, sheriff's fees, abstracts, publication fees, documentary revenue stamps and similar items required in securing merchantable title to lands taken by tax deed, provided that no charge shall be made for the time of any county officer or employe except as specified in this paragraph. The county board may determine a fair and reasonable average cost per real estate description of such items in which case such average cost shall be used in lieu of the exact amount of the foregoing items.

(b) All moneys paid in redemption of adversely or municipally owned taxes constituting liens against said land of date equal or subsequent to the date of tax sale certificate upon which the county tax deed was taken.

(c) The amount of the sales commissions paid to licensed real estate brokers for the sale of the land.

(8) DISTRIBUTION OF NET PROCEEDS. The net proceeds of the gross sale price of the land, if any, remaining after the deductions outlined in sub. (7) (a), (b) and (c) have been taken, shall then be prorated between the remaining nonoutlawed municipally owned taxes outstanding on the date the tax deed was taken, including the tax certificate on which the tax deed was taken, and paid to the owners of such tax certificates and taxes. Such proration shall be in the ratio that the net balance of the proceeds of the sale, after making the deductions authorized in sub. (7), bears to the redemption value of such outstanding nonoutlawed municipally owned taxes on the date the tax deed was taken, provided that in no case shall the payment to the local municipality exceed such redemption value of its nonoutlawed outstanding taxes, except that for taxes of 1942 and subsequent years referred to in ss. 74.03 (7) (d) and 74.031 (12) (e) the payment shall not exceed the original amount of such taxes.

(9) MERGER; TRANSFER; REINSTATEMENT. When the lands are taken by tax deed:

(a) The liens of all nonoutlawed municipally owned tax certificates and taxes shall merge in the county's title.

(b) The county treasurer shall cancel on his records all taxes which are not municipally owned as are prior in date to the date of the tax certificate upon which tax deed was

taken. The county shall transfer to its tax deed account all municipally owned taxes so merged in the county's title. Such merger and transfer shall be entered in the records of tax sales.

(c) If the county's title to the lands taken by tax deed is adjudged to be void while the title is held by the county, the county shall reinstate such canceled or transferred taxes in full force and effect the same as though never so canceled or transferred.

(d) The provisions of this subsection shall not repeal or supersede the provisions of section 75.67.

(10) **ACTIONS TO BAR FORMER OWNER; PARTIES DEFENDANT.** It shall not be necessary for any county which has acquired lands by tax deed to include any municipality which has an ownership interest in any taxes or tax sale certificates, as party defendant in any action brought by such county to bar former owners, pursuant to sections 75.40 to 75.52, and no such municipality shall be entitled to be made a party defendant in such action.

(11) **APPLICATION OF SECTION.** The foregoing provisions shall not impair any contract heretofore or hereafter entered into pursuant to the provisions of section 75.365, and shall apply to all settlements on and after October 9, 1947 in respect to the sale of land by a county to which the tax deed was taken by the county without regard to the date upon which the tax deed was taken by such county.

**History:** 1951 c. 356; 1955 c. 10.

**75.365 Agreements as to delinquent taxes.** (1) **COUNTIES MAY ENTER.** Written agreements may be entered into and be operative between a county and any town, city, village, metropolitan sewerage district or area, farm drainage district, or any other territory, area or district for the benefit of which any taxes may be levied, therein, upon prior authorization and approval thereof by the governing bodies thereof, providing for the disposition of liabilities of the county to such municipality upon or arising out of the return to said county of delinquent special assessments, delinquent general taxes, or both; the disposition of special assessment tax sale certificates, general tax sale certificates, or both, of which the county may be the holder or owner; the liabilities of the county arising by virtue of its acquiring any or all of such tax certificates, and the disposition of such liabilities; the taking of tax deeds by the county or any or all of such tax sales certificates; the liabilities of the county arising out of the taking of any or all of such tax deeds and the disposition of such liabilities; the disposition and distribution of the proceeds of the sale of any or all of such tax sale certificates, the sale of the lands upon which such tax deeds are so taken, or both; and the determination and disposition of any and all liabilities of the county in respect to any of the foregoing.

(2) **LIABILITY OF COUNTY LIMITED.** Such agreements may include provisions that the county upon acting pursuant to such agreement and the provisions thereof shall not be accountable or liable for any amount greater than that realized by it upon the sale of any of such certificates or upon the sale of said lands to which it takes tax deed thereunder or the amounts set forth in said agreement, and that in acting pursuant to such agreement the county shall not incur or be subjected to any liability to anyone except as therein set forth and that if such county should by reason of acting thereunder incur or be subjected to any other or different liability to pay or account in respect to such delinquent special assessments, general taxes, or both, then such local municipality will reimburse the county for such excess liability and indemnify it against any loss or damage that the county may sustain by reason of acting pursuant to such agreement; provided, that the city, town or village entering into such agreement may make payment, settlement or compromise of special assessment certificates or bonds to preclude or relieve the county from being subjected to liability thereon.

(3) **SALE UNDER AGREEMENT.** In the event of such agreement the county may sell any of the land to which it takes tax deed pursuant thereto, and that the title conveyed by the county upon such sale shall be in fee simple and free and clear from all tax liens or claims arising out of delinquent special assessments, delinquent general taxes, or both, except delinquent special assessments, delinquent or unpaid general taxes, or both, returned to the county after such sale by the county. Such agreement may provide that the county may sell any land, to which it has taken tax deed thereunder, at private or public sale. The county or the local municipality in which the land is situated may purchase such land when sold by the county pursuant to such agreement.

(4) **APPLICABILITY.** This section shall be controlling and operative in respect to delinquent general property taxes and special assessments authorized by the proper governing body to be imposed against lands, whether heretofore or hereafter returned delinquent, and the provisions hereof shall be applicable to such assessments and taxes, the general statutes to the contrary notwithstanding, but all provisions of the general statutes not in



conflict herewith shall be applicable, except that it does not repeal any of the provisions of the general statutes nor affect the applicability thereof to situations not covered herein.

**History:** 1951 c. 313.

**75.37 Waste on land sold; distress; claim against county or city.** (1) It shall be unlawful for any person or corporation to cut, destroy or remove any logs, wood or timber or any buildings, fixtures and other improvements assessed as real property from any land sold for the nonpayment of taxes while such taxes remain unpaid; and if any person shall cut, destroy or remove the same from such lands during the time aforesaid the county treasurer of the county or the city treasurer of any city which is authorized by law to sell its own delinquent taxes or assessments in which such lands are situated, in cases where the tax certificate is held by the county or such city, shall issue a warrant under his hand and seal to the sheriff, giving therein a description of such lands, the amount of such taxes, with interest and charges thereon then remaining unpaid and the years for which the same are unpaid, commanding such sheriff forthwith to seize such logs, wood, timber, buildings, fixtures and improvements, or materials salvaged therefrom, wherever the same may be found and to sell the same or a sufficient amount thereof to satisfy such taxes, with the interest and charges thereon and the costs of such seizure and sale.

(2) The sheriff shall receive such warrant and execute the same as therein directed, as in case of levy and sale on execution, and make return thereof with his doings thereon to the county treasurer or such city treasurer, as the case may be, within 60 days after the receipt of the same, and pay over all money collected thereon to such treasurer; provided, however, that no certificates shall be sold by the county treasurer or such city treasurer, in cases where warrants have been issued, unless the party applying to purchase the same shall pay all costs and charges incurred in the issuing and execution of said warrant. In case the tax certificate is not held by the county or such city the owner thereof shall have a lien upon any and all logs, wood, timber, buildings, fixtures and improvements assessed as real property, or materials salvaged therefrom, so cut, destroyed or removed from the lands to the amount of the tax certificate held by him against the same, together with all interest and charges thereon then remaining unpaid, and shall have the right to seize such logs, wood, timber, buildings, fixtures and improvements, or materials salvaged therefrom, wherever the same may be found and to sell the same, or a sufficient amount thereof to satisfy such taxes, with interest and charges thereon and the cost of seizure and sale, rendering any surplus upon such sale to the owner of the lands. No tax certificate holder who shall so cut, destroy or remove any logs, wood or timber, or any buildings, fixtures and other improvements assessed as real property upon any lands described in his certificate shall have any claim against the county or such city under the provisions of section 75.22.

**75.375 Waste on lands sold for taxes, penalty.** Any person who shall wilfully, maliciously or wantonly injure, destroy or commit waste upon any lands, tenements, or anything appertaining thereto which have been sold for the nonpayment of taxes while such taxes remain unpaid or in cases where the tax certificate is the property of the county shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$500, or by imprisonment in the county jail not more than 90 days or by both such fine and imprisonment.

**History:** 1955 c. 696 s. 270.

**75.38 Fees for deeds and certificates.** The county clerk shall collect as fees for every deed of land issued upon a tax sale, when such deed shall include lands in contiguous tracts not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres, seventy-five cents; and for every additional tract therein described, five cents, to be paid by the person to whom such deed is issued, and the clerk issuing such deed shall include therein so many parcels of land bid off, owned or redeemed by any person as he may desire.

**75.39 Actions, when barred.** The grantee named in any deed made by a county clerk or the treasurer of any incorporated city or village on the sale of lands for the nonpayment of taxes as provided by law, his heirs, executors, administrators or assigns may, at any time within three years after the date of such conveyance, commence an action against the person or persons owning the lands described in such conveyance at the time of making the sale upon which such conveyance was made, or any parcel thereof or interest therein, or against any person or persons claiming under such owner or owners, for the purpose of barring such former owner or owners and those claiming under them of all right, title, interest or claim in such lands; but no such action shall be commenced on any such deed issued in lieu of a void, informal or insufficient deed unless the same be commenced within three years after the date of such void, informal or insufficient deed.

**Cross Reference:** For recovery in ejectment when tax title is defective, see 275.15.

**75.40 Action, where and how brought.** Such action must be brought in the circuit court of the county in which the lands or some parcel of them, the title of which is sought to be barred by such action, are situated; and the plaintiff in such action may include in his complaint all the lands described in such conveyance, or any separate parcel, or as many separate parcels thereof as he shall see fit; and he shall make defendants all persons who were the former owners of the several parcels of land included in his complaint or those claiming under them or claiming any interest therein.

**75.41 Complaint.** The plaintiff in such action shall set forth in his complaint a description of all the lands the title to which is sought to be barred by such action; that he claims title to such lands under a deed made by a county clerk or the treasurer of an incorporated city or village, and set forth therein a copy of such deed; he shall also set forth the name or names of the former owner or owners of the several tracts of land described therein or the names of the persons claiming under such owner or owners, specifying the persons claiming each separate parcel thereof, and the amount of all taxes paid by him, including redemptions; and if such plaintiff have more than one such deed upon any parcel of land mentioned in such complaint, upon which he might bring such action, he shall set forth in such complaint a copy of each such deed, but as a separate cause of action.

**75.42 Defense, answer.** (1) The defendants in such action may answer severally, or such of them as are jointly interested in any separate parcel or parcels of land described in the complaint may answer jointly, either to the whole complaint or to any separate cause of action stated therein, that the action thereon was not commenced within the time limited by section 75.39; that the lands described in such complaint or some part or parts thereof to which the defendant or defendants so answering claim title or some interest therein were not liable to taxation at the time the tax for the nonpayment of which the land was sold and conveyed as specified in the complaint was levied; or that the tax for the nonpayment of which said lands purport to be sold was in fact paid before such sale; or that the land was redeemed from such sale as provided by law; or that the title to said land has become vested adversely to the plaintiff in the action under and by virtue of another tax deed; or that the deed, a copy of which is set forth in the complaint, was never executed by the officer whose name is subscribed thereto; or that the lands described in the complaint or some part thereof were improved, occupied or cultivated as described in section 75.12 (1), and that no notice was served upon the defendant or owner or occupant, as required by section 75.12, and no other defense to such action shall be set up by any defendant or defendants unless the defendant or defendants setting up the same shall, at the time of filing the answer, deposit with the clerk of the court in which such action is pending, for the use of the plaintiff in such action, the sum for which the parcel or parcels of land as to which they defend were sold, together with interest thereon at the rate of 8 per cent per annum from the date of the certificate of sale for taxes upon which such deed was issued; and also all such sums as shall have been paid by the plaintiff for subsequent taxes on such parcel or parcels, with interest thereon from the time of payment at the rate of 8 per cent per annum to the time of making such deposit; and shall state in the answer the fact that such deposit has been made, and the amount thereof, and that such defendant is ready to pay such portion of the costs and disbursements in the action as shall be adjudged just and reasonable, in case the plaintiff shall elect to receive such deposit and release to said defendant or defendants the parcel or parcels of land on account of which such deposit is made; and any defendant or defendants making the deposit and offer aforesaid may set up in their answer any other matter of defense which will avoid such deed; but no answer merely alleging the defendant's title, or denying the plaintiff's title to the lands described in such complaint, or any part or parcel thereof, or which merely alleges that the deed to the plaintiff is void shall be a sufficient answer; but every answer shall state specifically the grounds on which the defendant or defendants rely for avoiding the deed of the plaintiff.

(2) The defendant may, in all cases within the time limited by law for answering the complaint, execute and deliver to the plaintiff or his attorney a quitclaim deed of the lands described in the complaint, conveying all the right, title and interest of such defendant at the time of the commencement of the suit; or may, within such time, either after having delivered such deed or without such delivery, answer disclaiming any title to the land in question at the time of the commencement of the suit, in either of which cases the plaintiff shall not recover costs personally against any such defendant who quitclaims as aforesaid or who shall establish such disclaimer upon the trial of such action. In no case shall costs be taxed as a personal claim against any defendant for attorney's fees in excess of twenty-five dollars.

**75.43 Election to receive deposit; costs.** The plaintiff may, at any time within twenty days after receiving an answer showing that a deposit has been made by any defendant or defendants as provided in the preceding section, give notice to such defendant or defendants that he elects to receive such deposit and that he will, at a time specified in such notice, apply to the clerk of the circuit court, circuit judge or a court commissioner to adjust the costs and disbursements which said defendant or defendants ought to pay, and that upon the payment of the costs and disbursements so adjudged he will release to such defendant or defendants all right, title and claim which he has to the parcel or parcels of land on account of which such deposit is made by virtue of any sale or deed made for the nonpayment of taxes; and unless such costs are paid within twenty days after the same shall have been so adjusted the clerk of the court shall, upon presentation to him of an affidavit showing the nonpayment thereof, enter judgment therefor in favor of the plaintiff and against the defendant, which shall be enforced as other money judgments.

**75.44 Release.** On the payment of the costs by such defendant or defendants or the collection thereof the said plaintiff shall execute a release to said defendant or defendants of all such right, title, interest or claim in said parcel or parcels of lands, duly acknowledging the same, and deliver it to the said defendant or defendants; and thereupon said action shall be discontinued as to the said parcel or parcels of land so released.

**75.45 Deed as evidence.** In any action maintained under the provisions of this chapter the production of a deed, a copy of which is set forth in the complaint substantially in the form prescribed by law or a certified copy of the record thereof, shall be presumptive evidence of an absolute title in fee simple in the grantee therein named, his heirs or assigns in and to the land therein described.

**75.46 Trial; defendant's interest.** All issues of fact and of law joined in any such action shall be tried by the court unless the court shall otherwise direct or unless a party to an issue of fact in any such action shall demand a trial by jury, in which case such issues shall be tried by jury as other issues of fact; and on the trial of every such action every defendant shall be deemed to have a redeemable interest in all the lands described in the plaintiff's complaint in respect to which any relief or judgment is sought against such defendant, unless it be otherwise alleged therein.

**75.47 Separate trials.** The trial of any issue of fact or of law in such action joined with any defendant or defendants claiming title to and defending as to any separate parcel or parcels of land shall be had separately and a separate judgment may be rendered on such issue.

**75.48 Effect of judgment.** If a judgment shall be rendered either for want of an answer or upon the trial of an issue of law or fact in favor of the plaintiff and against the defendants claiming such lands or against a defendant or defendants claiming any separate parcel or parcels thereof, such judgment shall forever bar such defendants and all others claiming under them, after the filing of a notice of the pendency of such action as provided by law, from all right, title or interest in said lands or in such separate parcel or parcels thereof.

**75.49 Judgment for defendant.** If in any such action judgment be rendered in favor of any defendant claiming any parcel or parcels of said lands or interest therein, such judgment shall adjudge that there be released to such defendant all the plaintiff's right, title or claim, at the time of the commencement of the action, by virtue of any sale or deed made for the nonpayment of taxes to the land or interest as to which such judgment is rendered, and that the defendant recover his costs and disbursements in the action; and the money, if any, deposited by such defendant upon answering shall be applied in payment of such costs, and the surplus of such deposit, if any, shall be paid to the plaintiff.

**75.50 Unknown owners.** If the plaintiff in such action cannot ascertain who are the proper persons to make defendants as to any tract or parcel of land described in his complaint he may allege the fact in his complaint and they may be proceeded against as nonresident defendants and shall be described in the proceedings as unknown owners.

**History:** 1951 c. 342.

**75.52 Judgment a bar, when.** No such action shall be commenced by any person under the provisions of this chapter after a judgment shall have been rendered against him in any action founded on such tax deed commenced by him or those under whom he claims for the recovery of the possession of the lands described in such deed or any part thereof, nor after a judgment shall have been rendered against him in an action brought by the former owner to recover possession of the lands described in such deed or any part thereof.

**75.521 Foreclosure of tax liens by action in rem.** (1) **DEFINITIONS.** Wherever used or referred to in this section, unless a different meaning clearly appears from the context:

(a) "County" means one of the counties of the state of Wisconsin and includes any city of the state authorized by law to collect and sell its own taxes.

(b) "Tax lien" means the lien or interest evidenced by any county owned or held tax sale certificate upon which a tax deed may be applied for as provided by law.

(c) "Treasurer" means either the treasurer of such county or of such city.

(2) **APPLICATION OF THIS SECTION.** (a) *Adoption of method.* Notwithstanding the provisions of any other general, special or local law or charter provision of such city relating to foreclosure of tax sale certificates, taking of tax deeds upon such tax sale certificates, and perfecting such tax deed title by bar former owner action or quiet title action, or conveyance from former owners of any interest in said lands, the governing body of any county may elect to enforce the collection of tax liens, the taking of tax title in the name of such county to tax delinquent lands and the perfecting of such tax title in the county in the cases where this section applies by means of the methods provided for in this section. Such election shall be evidenced by an ordinance to such effect in substantially the following form:

"ORDINANCE ELECTING TO PROCEED UNDER SECTION 75.521 WIS. STATS. IN RELATION TO THE ENFORCEMENT OF COLLECTION OF TAX LIENS.

The county board of supervisors of the county of . . . do ordain as follows:

From and after . . . (*here insert dates*) the . . . (*here insert name of county*) elects to adopt the provisions of section 75.521 Wis. Stats. for the purpose of enforcing tax liens in such county in the cases where the procedure provided by such section is applicable."

Upon the adoption of such ordinance, the provisions of this section shall be applicable to such county and the treasurer of such county need not, thereafter, proceed upon its tax sale certificates in cases where this section is applicable in any of the other methods provided by chapter 75 or its charter provisions but may do so at his option.

(b) *Rescission of election to operate under section 75.521.* Any county, after at least one year from the adoption of such ordinance, may rescind such election by an ordinance to such effect, which ordinance shall be adopted in the same manner as the original ordinance. Upon the adoption of a rescinding ordinance, the provisions of this section shall cease to be applicable to such county.

(c) *Saving clause.* Neither the election to adopt the provisions of section 75.521 nor the election to rescind the same shall affect any action or proceeding for foreclosure of the tax lien commenced prior to such election or rescission and such action or proceeding may be continued in the same manner as though such election or rescission had not been made.

(d) *Provisions of in rem method supersede.* Whenever any county shall have adopted this section and is using the procedure herein provided, the provisions of this section shall, with respect to the particular tax liens being collected, supersede the provisions of all general, special or local laws relating to the collection of tax liens by such county in conflict therewith, provided that nothing contained in this subsection nor any use made of the procedure provided in this section shall prevent the use of other procedures provided for in other sections of the statutes in the collection of other tax liens at the option of the county treasurer.

(3) **COMMENCEMENT OF PROCEEDING TO FORECLOSE TAX LIEN.** (a) Whenever any land has been sold to the county for delinquent taxes and 3 years have elapsed since the date of the tax sale certificate the treasurer may file in the office of the clerk of the circuit court of such county, one or more lists of parcels of property affected by unpaid tax liens as shown on the delinquent tax rolls in said treasurer's office. Such parcels shall be numbered consecutively. Such list shall be known and designated as the "List of Tax Liens of . . . County Being Foreclosed by Proceeding in Rem 19., No. . ." and shall bear the following caption:

"STATE OF WISCONSIN: CIRCUIT COURT: . . . COUNTY

In the matter of the foreclosure of tax liens pursuant to section 75.521 Wisconsin Statutes by . . . County, List of Tax Liens for 19., Number . . ."

Such list shall contain as to each parcel, the following:

1. A brief description sufficient to identify each parcel affected by such tax lien. The description shall state the lot, block and section number of any parcel upon any tract, the plat or map of which is filed in the office of the register of deeds of such county. If the lands be unplatted an engineer's metes and bounds description shall be a sufficient description.

2. The name or names of the last owner or owners, and mortgagee or mortgagees of such parcel as such ownership or mortgage interest appears of record in the office of the register of deeds of the county wherein such parcel is situated, and the state of Wisconsin where it has a determined but unpaid inheritance tax lien, a filed, nonoutlawed income tax warrant or a docketed judgment, all in the county where such parcel is situated.

3. A statement of the amount of the principal sum of each tax lien in the hands of the county treasurer, together with the date from which and the rate at which interest shall be computed on said principal sum.

4. A petition to the court for judgment vesting title to each of said parcels of land in the county, as of the date of entry of judgment and barring any and all claims whatsoever of the former owner or any person claiming through and under him since the date of filing the list of tax liens in the office of the clerk of the circuit court.

5. The names of all municipalities, other than the municipal taxing district foreclosing, having any right, title or interest in the land or in the tax liens or in the proceeds thereof.

(b) Such list of tax liens shall be verified by the affidavit of the county treasurer and shall be posted in his office. The filing of such list of tax liens in the office of the clerk of the circuit court shall constitute and have the same effect as the filing and recording in the office of the register of deeds of such county of a separate and individual notice of the pendency of such proceeding as to each parcel described in such list, and likewise, not withstanding any other provision of law, shall constitute the commencement of a special proceeding by the county against each parcel of real estate therein described and have the same effect as the filing of an individual and separate petition or complaint by the county against each parcel of real estate therein described to enforce the payment of the tax liens against such property.

(c) A copy of the petition and so much of the list of tax liens as shall include the description of a particular parcel shall be mailed by registered mail by the county treasurer to the last known post-office address of each owner and mortgagee of record and the state of Wisconsin in the instances specified in subsection (3) (a) 2. and to each municipality, other than the municipal taxing district foreclosing, having any right, title or interest in the land or in the tax liens or the proceeds thereof. An affidavit of the treasurer setting forth the names of the owners, mortgagees, the state of Wisconsin in the proper case and municipalities for whom a post-office address has been ascertained, giving such addresses and stating that notice was mailed thereto, giving the date thereof, and further stating that no present post-office address was ascertainable for the other owners and mortgagees, shall be filed and constitute full compliance with this paragraph.

(4) DUTY OF THE CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT. Each clerk of the circuit court with whom such list of tax liens is filed, shall index it by year and list number, and alphabetically by the names of those set forth in the list, pursuant to sub. (3) (a) 2, in a separate book kept for that purpose and such clerk shall be entitled to a fee of \$3 for such receiving, filing and indexing of each such list, in lieu of any other fees to which he might otherwise be entitled for such services. The circuit court of such county in which such delinquent list is filed is hereby given jurisdiction of the proceeding authorized by this section.

(5) RIGHTS OF PERSONS HAVING AN INTEREST IN PARCELS OF LAND AFFECTED BY TAX LIENS. Every person, including any municipal taxing district other than the one foreclosing, having any right, title or interest in, or lien upon, any parcel described in such list may redeem such parcel by paying all of the sums mentioned in such list of tax liens together with interest thereon, or such portion thereof as is due for the interest therein or part thereof owned by such person which amount shall be determined by the county treasurer on application, before the expiration of the redemption period mentioned in the notice published pursuant to sub. (6), or may serve a verified answer upon the county treasurer of such county, as provided in sub. (7). The caption of such answer shall contain a reference to the number or numbers of the parcels concerned as shown by the treasurer's list. Such answer must be served on said county treasurer and filed in the office of the clerk of the circuit court within 30 days after the date mentioned in the notice published pursuant to sub. (6), as the last day for redemption. In the event of the failure to redeem or answer by any person having the right to redeem or answer within the time herein limited, such person, and all persons claiming under and through him, from and after the date of the filing of said list of tax liens with the clerk of the circuit court, shall be forever barred and foreclosed of all his right, title and interest in and to the parcel described in such list of tax liens and a judgment in foreclosure may be taken as herein provided. Upon redemption as permitted by this section, the person redeeming shall be entitled to a certificate evidencing such redemption from the county treasurer of such county, describing the property in the same manner as it is described in such list of tax liens and the fact of such redemption shall be noted upon the tax rolls in the office

of the county treasurer, who shall file a certified copy of such redemption certificate with the clerk of the circuit court and upon such filing, such clerk shall note the word "Redeemed" and the date of such filing opposite the description of said parcel on such list of tax liens. Such notation shall operate to cancel the notice of pendency of proceeding with respect to such parcel or such portion thereof. The person so redeeming shall be entitled to add the amount paid in redemption to the face amount of any lien which he may have against said lands and to have interest thereon until paid.

(6) PUBLIC NOTICE OF IN REM PROCEEDING. Upon the filing of such list in the office of the clerk of the circuit court, the county treasurer forthwith shall prepare a notice that such list of tax liens and petition has been so filed and a copy thereof posted in the office of said county treasurer. Such treasurer shall cause such notice, together with the list of tax liens and petition, to be published at least once a week for 3 successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation published in the English language in such county possessing the qualifications specified in s. 331.20, selected by such treasurer, and if there be none, in at least one such newspaper published in an adjoining county, and if there be no such newspaper, then in 2 newspapers having a general circulation in the county. Such notice shall be in substantially the following form:

NOTICE OF COMMENCEMENT OF PROCEEDING IN REM TO  
FORECLOSE TAX LIENS BY . . . COUNTY

(Here insert list of tax liens and petition as filed in office of clerk of the circuit court.)

TAKE NOTICE that all persons having or claiming to have any right, title or interest in or lien upon the real property described in the list of tax liens, No. . . , on file in the office of the clerk of the circuit court of . . . county, dated . . . , and hereinabove set forth, are hereby notified that the filing of such list of tax liens in the office of the clerk of the circuit court of . . . county constitutes the commencement by said . . . county of a special proceeding in the circuit court for . . . county to foreclose the tax liens therein described by foreclosure proceeding in rem and that a notice of the pendency of such proceeding against each piece or parcel of land therein described was filed in the office of the clerk of the circuit court on . . . (insert date). Such proceeding is brought against the real property herein described only and is to foreclose the tax liens described in such list. No personal judgment will be entered herein for such taxes, assessments or other legal charges or any part thereof.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that all persons having or claiming to have any right, title or interest in or lien upon the real property described in said list of tax liens are hereby notified that a certified copy of such list of tax liens has been posted in the office of the county treasurer of . . . county and will remain posted for public inspection up to and including . . . (here insert date at least 8 weeks from the date of the first publication of this notice) which date is hereby fixed as the last day for redemption.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that any person having or claiming to have any right, title or interest in or lien upon any such parcel may, on or before said . . . (insert redemption final date), redeem such delinquent tax liens by paying to the county treasurer of . . . county, the amount of all such unpaid tax liens and in addition thereto, all interest and penalties which have accrued on said unpaid tax liens, computed to and including the date of redemption.

. . . County  
By . . .  
County Treasurer

(7) RIGHT OF PERSON HAVING AN INTEREST IN OR LIEN UPON PARCELS DESCRIBED IN LIST OF TAX LIENS, TO ANSWER PETITION. Every person having any right, title or interest in or lien upon any parcel described in such list of tax liens, may serve a duly verified answer upon the county treasurer for such county, setting forth in detail, the nature and amount of his interest and objecting to the proposed foreclosure upon one or more of the following grounds only:

(a) That the lands in which such person is interested, described in such list of tax liens, were not liable to taxation or special assessment at the time the tax or special assessment for the nonpayment of which the tax lien arises, was levied.

(b) That the tax, for the nonpayment of which said tax lien arises, was in fact paid before the last day of the redemption period provided by law.

(c) That the tax lien is barred by the statute of limitations.

No other defense to the petition of said county set forth in such tax list, shall be set up. Such answer must be filed in the office of the clerk of the circuit court and served upon the county treasurer of such county within 30 days after the date hereinabove mentioned, as the last date for redemption.

(8) DUTY OF THE COURT TO ENTER JUDGMENT IN DEFAULT CASES. In the event of the failure to redeem or answer by any person having the right to redeem or answer as hereinabove provided, such person and all persons claiming under and through him, from and after the date of the filing of the list of tax liens in the office of the clerk of the circuit court of the county, shall be forever barred and foreclosed of all his right, title and interest and equity of redemption in and to the parcel described in such list of the tax liens, and upon filing of an affidavit of such default or failure of redemption by the county treasurer of such county, the court in which such list of tax liens is filed, shall render final judgment ordering and adjudging that the county is vested with an estate in fee simple absolute in such lands, subject, however, to all unpaid taxes and charges which are subsequent to the latest dated valid tax lien appearing on the list specified in subsection (3) (b) of this section and to recorded restrictions as provided by section 75.14 (4) and all persons, both natural and artificial, including the state of Wisconsin, infants, incompetents, absentees and nonresidents who may have had any right, title, interest, claim, lien or equity or redemption in such lands, are forever barred and foreclosed of such right, title, interest, claim, lien or equity of redemption. Such judgment shall be deemed to be based on the latest dated valid tax lien appearing on the list of tax liens. No personal judgment shall be entered against any person having or claiming to have any right, title or interest in or lien upon said lands. Such judgment shall have the effect of the issuance of a tax deed or deeds and of judgment to bar former owners and quiet title thereon.

(9) FILING OF AFFIDAVIT. All affidavits of filing, publication, posting, mailing or other acts required by this section, shall be made by the person performing such acts and shall be filed in the office of the clerk of the circuit court of the county in which the property subject to such tax lien is situated and shall, together with all other documents required in this section, filed in such office, constitute and become part of the judgment roll in such foreclosure proceeding.

(10) CONTESTED ISSUES AND TRIAL THEREOF. If a duly verified answer is served upon the county treasurer within the period mentioned in sub. (7), the court shall hear and determine the issues raised by the petition and answer in the same manner and under the same rules as it hears and determines civil actions, except as in this section otherwise provided. Upon such trial, proof that such tax or special assessment, together with any interest or penalty which may have been due was paid, or that the property was not subject to tax or special assessment, or that such tax lien is barred by the statute of limitations, shall constitute a complete defense. Whenever an answer is interposed as herein provided, there shall be a severance of the proceeding as to any parcel or parcels of land in which such answering defendant has any right, title or interest as alleged in his answer, and as to the other parcels in such list, the proceeding shall proceed as provided in sub. (8).

(11) PREFERENCE OVER OTHER PROCEEDINGS AND ACTIONS. Any proceeding brought pursuant to this section shall be given preference over all other causes and actions not on trial and no such proceeding shall be referred.

(12) PRESUMPTIONS OF VALIDITY; GUARDIAN AD LITEM. (a) The county need not plead or prove the various steps, proceedings and notices for the assessment and levy of the taxes, assessments or other lawful charges against the lands set forth in the list of tax liens and all such taxes, assessments or other lawful charges and the lien thereof shall be presumed to be valid. A defendant alleging any jurisdictional defect or invalidity in the tax or special assessment, because of which said land was not liable to taxation or special assessment, must particularly specify in his answer such jurisdictional defect or invalidity and must affirmatively establish such defense.

(b) This section shall apply to and be valid and effective with respect to all defendants even though one or more be infants, incompetents, absentees or nonresidents of the state of Wisconsin, provided that a guardian ad litem shall be appointed to serve for all persons known or unknown who have or may have an interest in the lands described in any list and who are or may be minors or incompetents at the date of filing such list. Such guardian ad litem may be appointed by the court without notice, and the fee for his services as fixed by the court shall be paid by the county.

(13) JUDGMENT, CONTENTS. (a) Where, as to any parcel in the list of tax liens, an answer has been interposed by a party and the court shall determine in favor of such party upon such answer, the court shall make a final judgment divesting said parcel of the lien alleged to have accrued against same.

(b) In the event that the court shall determine that the issue raised by the answer of the defendant is without merit, a final judgment to such effect shall be entered ordering and adjudging that the county is vested with an estate in fee simple absolute in such lands subject, however, to all unpaid taxes and charges which are subsequent to the latest dated tax lien appearing on the list specified in subsection (3) (b) of this section and to

recorded restrictions as provided by section 75.14, and all persons, both natural and artificial, including the state of Wisconsin, infants, incompetents, absentees and nonresidents who may have had any right, title, interest, claim, lien or equity of redemption in such lands, are forever barred and foreclosed of such right, title, interest, claim, lien or equity of redemption. Such judgment shall be deemed to be based on the latest dated tax lien appearing on the list of tax liens. Such judgment shall have the effect of the issuance of a tax deed or deeds and of judgment to bar former owners and quiet title thereon.

(14) **JUDGMENT TO BE RECORDED.** A certified copy of the judgment of the court in both default and contested cases shall be recorded by the prevailing party in the office of the register of deeds of such county.

(14a) **DAMAGES.** Any person who was the owner of any right, title or interest in land which was lost by judgment of foreclosure as provided in this section may within 2 years from the date of entry of such judgment, in the cases hereinafter mentioned other than fraud and within 6 years in the case of fraud, commence an action in the circuit court against the county to recover the fair market value of his interest therein at the date of entry of said judgment of foreclosure in rem. If the court determines that such person's right, title and interest in said land was unjustly foreclosed and lost because (a) said person's interest in such lands was not subject to taxation or special assessment at the time of the levy of the tax for nonpayment of which said lands were foreclosed, or (b) that in fact such tax was paid by said owner, or (c) that the tax lien upon which the judgment of foreclosure in rem was based was barred by the statute of limitations, or (d) if such person lost said property through fraud without fault on his part, the court shall determine the fair market value of said land or of said person's interest therein as hereinabove set forth. The fair market value shall not exceed the amount arrived at by dividing the assessed valuation of such lands in the year in which such judgment in rem was entered by the percentage ratio of real estate assessments prevailing for the taxing district in which the lands were located as set forth in the equalization for state tax purposes of the same year. The court shall award judgment to such plaintiff in such amount, together with a reasonable attorney's fees to be fixed by the court, and the plaintiff's costs and disbursements of such action. The amount awarded the plaintiff shall be reduced by the total amount due, as of the date of entry of such judgment, for all current taxes and upon all tax sales certificates held by the county on such date that the court shall find were valid. Upon payment of the judgment the county may charge back as a tax to any taxing district the amount which such district received from the county in payment of taxes and interest on said land either by distribution of proceeds of sale thereof by the county or through other payment by the county to the extent that it exceeds the amount distributable to such district had the same been based upon the payment of the taxes and interest found by the court to be properly payable at the time of the entry of the judgment of foreclosure and applied in reduction of the amount awarded to the plaintiff hereunder.

(15) **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section shall become effective April 1, 1948.

(16) **ACT RETROACTIVE.** After the grace period allowed by the effective date of this section as provided by sub. (15), this section shall be retroactive to include all tax sale certificates not outlawed by the statute of limitations, and the rights of any minor, incompetent or nonresident in any tax sale certificate of date prior to April 1, 1948 shall be governed by the provisions hereof.

**History:** 1951 c. 324; 1955 c. 10; 1957 c. 203.

As applied to proceedings for the levy and collection of taxes, "due process" does not imply or require the right to such notice and hearings as are deemed essential to the validity of the proceedings and judgments of judicial tribunals. An individual acquiring real estate is presumed to know what the law provides in respect to the taxation thereof. Statutes relating to the collection of, and the foreclosure of liens for, delinquent taxes on real estate may adopt a procedure summary in nature, and notice of such proceeding need not be more than reasonably adequate to afford the owner an opportunity to protect his property. The procedure provided in this section, and particularly the notice to be given to each property owner by mailing by registered mail to his last known post-office address a copy of the petition and list of tax liens, as provided in (3) (c), complies with due process, as to minors and incompetents as well as to other owners, the statute also requiring that a guardian ad litem be appointed for minors, incompetents, absentees and unknown persons. *Devitt v. Milwaukee*, 261 W 276, 52 NW (2d) 872.

List of tax liens should set forth as to

each parcel all those tax certificates then held by the county and then eligible for tax deeds. (5) requires only payment of the amount due on certificates eligible for tax deeds. The year to be inserted in the caption is the calendar year in which the list is filed. The description of a platted parcel must include the section number as well as the lot and block number. The separate index of lists of tax liens to be kept by the clerk of circuit court is to contain the names of owners and mortgagees, alphabetically. 39 Atty. Gen. 522.

It is not the duty of the register of deeds to furnish free abstracting service for the county in connection with foreclosure of tax liens by action in rem. 42 Atty. Gen. 21.

Payment may be made after commencement of in rem proceedings under this section of less than the amount necessary to redeem all of the tax liens listed therein against a parcel of land. Unless the amount paid before the expiration of the redemption period is sufficient to pay all of the listed tax liens in full, judgment may be entered based on any listed tax lien remaining unredeemed, and the county is under no obligation to refund the payment made. 43 Atty. Gen. 277.



**75.54 Reassessment of taxes by order of court.** (1) In all actions in any court of this state, in which either party seeks to avoid or set aside in whole or in part any assessment, tax or tax proceeding or reassessment, if the court is of the opinion, after a hearing had, that, for any reason affecting the groundwork of the tax and all the property in any assessment district, said assessment, tax or tax proceeding should be set aside, the court shall immediately stay all proceedings in such action and in all other actions affecting the assessment, tax or tax proceeding in such district until a reassessment of the property therein can be made; and the proper officers of the municipality constituting the assessment district or in which the district is located shall reassess such property in the manner specified in the statutes, and shall levy upon the same the amount of taxes for the year in question. Such reassessment shall be made by the assessor of the municipality or assessment district or by the person the court appoints and the assessment roll shall be submitted to and passed upon by the board of review in the manner and after like notice as in case of the original assessment.

(2) Upon the completion of the review by said board, the clerk of the town, village or city in which the reassessed district is situated shall extend upon such assessment roll the taxes lawfully levied upon and apportioned to the property described therein for such year, and such roll and tax so extended thereon shall be a public record and be prima facie evidence of the amount of tax justly chargeable against the party seeking to set aside or avoid the original assessment, tax or tax proceeding and upon the lot or lots, tract or tracts of land respecting which the said action is brought, and shall also be prima facie evidence of the amount of tax justly chargeable against any and every other person or corporation and every other lot, parcel or tract of land in such tax roll for such year in any legal proceeding that may arise respecting the same. Such reassessment and tax roll shall be completed and filed with the clerk of the municipality constituting such assessment district or in which such district is located within ninety days from the date of the entry of such order unless the court upon motion and cause shown shall extend the time therefor.

(3) Upon such completion and filing, notice thereof shall be given by such clerk to the clerk of the court in which such action is pending; and such last-mentioned clerk shall thereupon give notice thereof to the attorneys for the parties to such action and to the attorneys in all other actions pending in which the validity of such original assessment may be involved. If any party seeking to set aside or avoid the original assessment, tax or tax proceeding shall desire to contest the validity of such reassessment, he shall, within twenty days after notice of the completion and filing of such reassessment and tax roll, file with the clerk of the court where such action is pending objections in writing to such reassessment or tax roll, a copy of which objections shall within five days after such filing, be served upon the attorney for the opposite party and thereupon the court may direct an issue to be made up involving the objections aforesaid, which shall be tried summarily by the court, which shall make an order sustaining or overruling such objections. If by such order such reassessment or tax roll shall be held invalid subsequent reassessments of such tax may be had in manner and form as hereinbefore provided and similar proceedings may be resorted to, to determine the validity of any such reassessment; or the court in its discretion may upon sustaining objections made to any reassessment, determine and fix the amount of tax which ought justly to be paid by the party or parties contesting such original assessment, tax or tax proceeding, and for that purpose, with or without directing a further issue to be made up, the court may proceed to take such further evidence as may be necessary to make such determination.

(4) If such reassessment and tax roll be held by the court regular and valid or if no objections thereto shall be filed, the court shall make an order requiring the party or parties contesting the original assessment, tax or tax proceeding to pay into court, for the use and benefit of the party entitled thereto the amount which by such reassessment he or they justly ought to pay. If the amount of tax imposed upon the property of such contesting party by such valid reassessment, or by the subsequent determination and order of the court, shall equal or exceed the amount imposed thereon by the original assessment and tax roll, the party or parties contesting the validity of such assessment shall be adjudged to pay the costs of such suit; otherwise, upon complying with the order of the court last aforesaid, he or they shall be entitled to judgment with costs; provided, however, that no judgment rendered in any such action shall in any way affect the validity of any tax against any other person than the parties to such action or any tract or parcel of land or other property than that described in complaint therein.

(5) The value of the reassessed property shall be fixed, as nearly as may be, as of the day the original assessment was made, and the rules for determining the same shall be those provided by law. A like stay of proceedings and reassessment shall be ordered in all cases in which a tax which has been reassessed by any county, town or village board, or

common council for one or more years shall be adjudged uncollectable or void for any reason affecting the groundwork of the tax so as to require a reassessment in order to determine the amount properly due. When such reassessed tax shall have been levied in different years it shall not be necessary to make separate assessment rolls for each year; but the valuations for each year respectively, may be placed opposite the description of the property on the assessment roll in columns headed with the figures of the year, so that the valuations for each year of reassessments shall be kept distinct from other years entered upon the tax roll. All the provisions of this section shall apply to the making and completion and to objections and further proceedings in respect to such assessment, and the same shall be treated with respect to each year which it purports to embrace as if it were a separate reassessment roll for that year. This section shall apply to all actions whether determined upon default or otherwise.

(6) If however, in any such action now pending or which may be begun hereafter the evidence enables the court to determine, with reasonable certainty, the amount of taxes which were justly chargeable against the lands involved in the action, the court, in its discretion, may proceed to judgment without staying proceedings or ordering a reassessment, if it finds that it is for the best interests of all parties to the action that it should do so.

It is the settled law in Wisconsin that statutory rights of appeal from determinations of benefits or damages in special-assessment proceedings, even when expressly labeled as the exclusive remedy, only relate to the determination of the amount of benefits, damages or special assessments, and do not preclude resort to actions in equity for injunction, or other appropriate relief, if either the validity of the proceedings, or the statute under which the proceedings were had, is attacked. Special-assessment statutes and proceedings constitute a special field of law, and the settled principles there established in respect to appropriate forms of actions to raise the question of the invalidity of the proceedings do not establish precedent which must be followed in other fields of law. *Perkins v. Peacock*, 263 W 644, 58 NW (2d) 536.

**75.55 Application of section 75.54.** The provisions of section 75.54 shall be construed to permit the reassessment, by or under the direction or authority of any city, of the property, real and personal, therein, which city, before and until the passage of these statutes, was authorized by law to make its own tax sales, tax certificates and tax deeds by its own proper officers. And in and for and in respect to every such city and the property, real and personal, therein the mayor and council thereof, the assessors thereof, the city clerk thereof, the board of equalization thereof, and the city treasurer thereof shall, as to any such city and the wards therein, respectively exercise all the powers and perform all the duties and proceed in the manner hereinbefore provided in respect to towns, villages and other cities, and exercise the powers and perform the duties devolved upon the board of supervisors, upon the assessors, upon the town clerk, upon the board of review and upon the town treasurer, respectively, for the reassessment of taxes and the collection thereof.

**75.61 Tax sales. (1) ONE YEAR LIMITATION.** Every action enumerated in ss. 75.57 (Stats. 1955) and 66.635, and every action or proceeding to set aside any sale of lands for the nonpayment of taxes, or to cancel any tax certificate, or to restrain the issuing of any tax certificate, or tax deed, for any error or defect going to the validity of the assessment, and affecting the groundwork of such tax, or on account of any void or defective special assessment, shall be commenced within one year from the date of such tax sale, and not thereafter. In every action brought to set aside any such sale, or to cancel any tax certificate, or to restrain the issuing of any tax deed upon any ground whatever not going to the validity of the assessment and affecting the groundwork of such tax or special assessment, the plaintiff, if he show himself otherwise entitled to judgment, shall, before the entry thereof within a reasonable time to be fixed by the court, pay into the court for the person or persons claiming under such tax sale or tax certificate the amount for which such land was sold, and the amount paid by such person or persons for taxes levied upon the premises subsequent to such sale, with interest on all such amounts at the rate of 8 per cent per annum from the times of payment until the said money be so paid into court; and in default of such payment within the time so fixed the defendant shall have judgment in the action. This provision as to the payment into court to be made by the plaintiff shall apply to all actions brought to cancel any tax deed, or to remove the cloud upon any title created by any tax certificate or tax deed where the action impeaches the tax deed or tax certificate upon any grounds whatever not affecting the groundwork of the tax for the nonpayment of which such deed or tax certificate was issued.

(2) **TAX CERTIFICATES OF COUNTY, DISCOUNT ON.** Whenever the county owns and holds tax certificates upon real estate and the owner of said real estate or any person, firm, association or corporation holding a valid lien thereon shall claim the assessment of said real estate to be greater than the value that can ordinarily be obtained therefor at private sale, the respective town board, village board or city council where said real estate is situated

may take proof under oath of the value of said real estate and make a finding thereon. Upon the filing of said finding with the county treasurer he shall accept from said owner or lienholder the proper proportional tax on said real estate based upon the value so found, together with the proper charges, as in the case of redemption of tax certificates, shall cancel said tax certificate, and shall give to said owner or lienholder a receipt for said tax. The difference between the tax as returned and the amount of such proportional tax, exclusive of charges, received by the county as a result of the compromise shall be charged to the town, village or city which returned the same and may be included by the county as a special charge in the next tax levy against such town, city or village.

**History:** 1957 c. 699.

**75.62 Tax sales; actions to set aside.** (1) **CONDITIONAL PAYMENT.** Whenever any action or special proceeding is hereafter commenced to set aside any sale of lands for the nonpayment of taxes, or to cancel any tax certificate, or to restrain the issuing of any tax certificate or tax deed, or to set aside any tax, for any error or defect going to the validity of the assessment and affecting the groundwork of such tax, within 20 days after the commencement of such action the plaintiff in such action or special proceeding shall pay or cause to be paid to the county, town, city, or village officer entitled to receive the same, the amount of taxes, interest and charges levied against the said lands involved in such action, as a condition of maintaining said action.

(2) **REASSESSMENT; PROCEEDING.** If in said action or proceeding a reassessment is ordered, the court shall, upon the completion of said reassessment made in the manner required by statute, determine the amount which, according to said reassessment, the plaintiff ought justly to have paid upon the lands involved in said action or special proceeding.

(3) **JUDGMENT.** The plaintiff in such action or special proceeding shall be entitled to recover judgment for the amount, if any, he so paid in excess of the amount the court shall finally determine he ought to have paid on the lands involved in said action or proceeding, with interest from the date of such payment.

(4) **PAYMENT OF JUDGMENT.** Payment of any judgment so recovered by the plaintiff, shall be made forthwith by the treasurer of any such county, town, city or village, upon presentation of a certified copy thereof, without other or further order. He shall preserve said copy of said judgment as his warrant for such payment and shall require the satisfaction of record of said judgment upon the making of such payment. The amount of any judgment so paid by the county treasurer shall be charged to the proper town, city or village and may be included by the county as a special charge against such town, city or village if such judgment shall be the result of an error or defect caused by said town, city or village or official thereof.

The provisions of (1) in regard to pre-payment do not apply to delinquent special assessments made under the Milwaukee city charter, even though tax certificates have been issued on them. *Wisconsin Electric Power Co. v. Milwaukee*, 275 W 436, 82 NW (2d) 344.

**75.63 Ejectment as to public lands; conditions.** (1) No action shall be commenced, maintained or prosecuted by or on behalf of the original owner or any person claiming title through or under such owner to recover possession of or in any way involving the title to any lands conveyed to the state of Wisconsin by any county, or attempted to be so conveyed, and sold by said state to any person until all taxes levied and assessed thereon from the date of the sale thereof by the state, together with all legal charges for assessing and collecting the same and interest thereon at the rate of eight per centum per annum from the fifteenth day of May in each and every year during which the said lands were assessed, commencing with the May following the first assessment after such sale, shall have been paid into the treasury of the county in which such lands shall lie; nor until all delinquent taxes levied upon and returned against said lands and remaining unpaid when the same were so conveyed or attempted to be to the state, together with the like interest thereon, shall have been paid into such county treasury; which money shall be retained in said treasury to abide the event of such action and be returned to the party paying or depositing the same if he shall fail to maintain such action; otherwise, so much thereof as covers the delinquent taxes above mentioned and interest thereon at the rate aforesaid shall be retained by such county and the remainder shall be paid over to the person purchasing the same from the state or his legal representatives.

(2) In case the title to any such lands shall be adjudged to be in such original owner or party claiming title through or under him they shall be deemed to be and shall be subject to taxation during the time the same were held by the state in like manner as if they had not been conveyed to or held by it, and the taxes for such period shall be levied and assessed upon such lands and collected in like manner as other taxes upon real estate. In all such actions the court shall enter an order requiring the plaintiff therein, within a

reasonable time to be fixed in the order, to comply with the provisions of this section by payment of the taxes, charges and interest as provided herein, and in default of compliance therewith the court shall dismiss the action. Nothing herein contained shall be construed as amending or repealing any of the provisions of sections 75.26, 75.27, 75.61 or 275.15.

**75.64 No jurisdiction; issue of deed postponed; deposit.** (1) In all cases where action is now pending or shall hereafter be commenced for the setting aside of any sale of lands, or for the cancellation of any tax certificate, or for enjoining or restraining the issuing of a tax deed thereon upon the ground that the lands so sold or described in such certificate were not liable to taxation, or that the taxes on such lands were paid prior to such sale, or that such lands have been redeemed according to law, the owner of, or any person interested in, the lands covered by the lien of said certificate may, at any time before final judgment is entered in such action, deposit with the county clerk, or when such certificate shall have been issued by a city treasurer, then with such treasurer, the amount for which such lands were sold, with interest thereon from the date of such sale to the date of such deposit at eight-tenths of one per cent per month or fraction thereof, together with the legal charges thereon.

(2) The said clerk or treasurer shall retain such deposit until the final determination of the action, and in case such certificate shall be vacated and set aside or the issuing of such deed be permanently restrained, the money so deposited shall, at the time of entry of judgment or at any time thereafter, upon demand, be returned to the person depositing the same. In case final judgment shall be rendered in such action sustaining the validity of such sale and tax certificate the court shall compute the interest upon such certificate from the date of such deposit to the date of rendering judgment at eight-tenths of one per cent per month or fraction thereof and add the same to the costs and disbursements taxable in such action and the amount of such deposit, and shall enter judgment against the plaintiff therefor, and no tax deed shall be issued upon such certificate unless the plaintiff shall fail to pay to such clerk or treasurer, for the use of the owner of such certificate, the amount of such judgment within twenty days after the rendition thereof, together with interest thereon.

**75.67 Tax sales, certificates and deeds in Milwaukee city and county.** (1) In counties containing a city authorized to sell land for nonpayment of its taxes, whenever either such county or city acquired, subsequent to January 1, 1933, any property by tax deed, or foreclosure deed, upon its delinquent owned tax certificates or by quitclaim deed or by any other means, the assignment or sale of other tax certificates and the redemption and cancellation thereof shall be as provided by this section.

(2) All tax certificates issued upon a sale of such property by such county or city on the same day or subsequent to the date of sale of the certificate upon which such deed was acquired, and which certificates are owned by such county or city at the time of the acquisition of the property, shall only be sold by assignment or otherwise to such county or city so owning such property. On any tax sale subsequent to the acquisition of such property after the first Monday of August in any year, such county or city so owning such land shall be the exclusive purchaser of the tax certificates and the county or the city treasurer shall bid in and purchase the same. Any transfer or sale of a tax certificate in violation of these provisions shall be null and void. It is the duty of the city and the county treasurer to give the other, as the case may be, written notice of the acquisition of such property within twenty-four hours, Sundays and holidays excluded, after such tax deed, foreclosure deed, or other conveyance has been acquired; and upon receipt of such notice it is the duty of such treasurer, as the case may be, to make entry of such notice upon his sales records.

(3) (a) Whenever such property has been so acquired as a result of tax sale before or after March 14, 1941, the city treasurer shall notify the county clerk and the county treasurer, or the county clerk shall notify the city treasurer, as the case may be, in writing thereof within 24 hours thereafter, Sundays and holidays excluded. The county treasurer or the city treasurer upon receipt of such notice shall forthwith charge the amount, without interest or penalties, of all city, county, state and metropolitan sewerage district current and delinquent taxes, all unpaid instalments of special assessments and other assessments, charges and tax certificates which are liens upon the land, and which are owned or held by or due to such county or city, as the case may be, and upon which the time limitations of s. 75.20 have not expired, to a "tax deed in force" account, and such taxes, assessments and certificates shall thereby be considered as paid or redeemed and such taxes shall be marked paid or redeemed on the tax roll, as the case may be; thereafter the amounts thereof owned by or due to such county shall be charged back against such city and such amounts thereof owned or held by or due to such city shall be credited to such city in the next tax levy upon such city by the county.

(b) On or before October 1 of each year, the city treasurer and the county treasurer shall respectively furnish the other with an itemized statement of the amounts so charged

by him, as the case may be, to the city's or county's "tax deed in force" account as a result of tax deeds taken by the city or county. The county clerk shall include an itemized statement of such amounts in the apportionment filed by him. If any such tax deed is set aside, the city treasurer and the county treasurer shall respectively credit the other with the amounts so charged with respect to the deed set aside, and the amounts and entries by either treasurer with reference thereto, comprising said amounts shall be as though no charge had been made to a "tax deed in force" account; and the city treasurer and the county treasurer, respectively, shall, on or before October 1 of each year, advise the other of such credits due him.

(c) In the event that such property is so acquired by such city while the county tax roll is in the possession of its city treasurer, the latter shall consider such taxes as paid and mark the tax roll accordingly, and furnish the county treasurer with a statement thereof upon a form provided by the county. He shall return such records to the county treasurer with the delinquent county tax roll, and shall receive credit therefor the same as for delinquent taxes. The amount for which such credit is given shall be included in the amount to be charged back to such city in succeeding apportionment of county taxes.

**75.68 Consideration in sale of land for nonpayment of taxes.** Any county or any city therein authorized by charter to sell and purchase land for nonpayment of taxes may sell or dispose of land acquired by it by tax deed or deed of foreclosure on tax certificates, or by quitclaim deed or by any other means, and not needed by it for public use, for a consideration in amount the same as or more or less than the full value which could ordinarily be obtained therefor at a private sale. The amount of such consideration shall not affect the determination, in any other proceeding, of such full value of such property or of any comparable property similarly situated. Any such sale or disposition of lands shall be made subject to the provisions of section 75.69.

**75.69 Sale of tax delinquent real estate.** (1) Except in counties containing a population of 500,000 or more, no tax delinquent real estate acquired by a municipality as defined in section 75.35 (1) (a), shall be sold unless the sale and an appraised value of such real estate shall have first been advertised in a newspaper of general circulation within such county at least once each week for 3 successive weeks prior to the date of such sale. Any such municipality may accept the bid most advantageous to it but every bid less than the appraised value of the property shall be rejected. Any such municipality is authorized to sell for an amount equal to or above the appraised value, without readvertising, any land previously advertised for sale.

(2) This section shall not apply to exchange of property under s. 59.97 (5), nor to withdrawal and sale of county forest lands. This section shall not apply to the sale or exchange of lands to or between municipalities or to the state.

(3) This section shall apply to all tax delinquent lands regardless of the date of acquisition by the municipality.

**History:** 1953 c. 61; 1955 c. 47.

When county takes tax deed to land and conveys the same to town in exchange for real estate tax credit, such land continues to be "tax delinquent real estate." Where the town board attempted to sell such land without complying with the provisions of (1), which require that the land be appraised and advertised, the sale was invalid. 42 Atty. Gen. 73.

**75.70 Delinquent tax lands and taxes.** (1) **DEEDS TO MUNICIPALITIES.** The county board may authorize the county clerk to deed county-owned lands to towns, cities or villages having an excess of delinquent real estate taxes to their credit in exchange for such part of the interest of the town, city or village for one or more years as may be agreed upon by the county board and the governing body of the town, city or village. The lands so conveyed shall be valued at not less than the face value of the certificates covering them.

(2) **PURCHASE OF TAXES.** The county board may, by a two-thirds vote, authorize the county to purchase and assume such delinquent taxes, tax certificates and interest thereon from any town, city or village, exclusive of the penalty provided by s. 74.03, as exceed the sum then due the county from the town, city or village for unpaid county taxes.

**History:** Stats. 1953 s. 59.07 (21), 59.08 (27); 1955 c. 651.