

PROPERTY CODE
SUBTITLE B. LIENS

CHAPTER 51. PROVISIONS GENERALLY APPLICABLE TO LIENS

Sec. 51.0001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Book entry system" means a national book entry system for registering a beneficial interest in a security instrument that acts as a nominee for the grantee, beneficiary, owner, or holder of the security instrument and its successors and assigns.

(2) "Debtor's last known address" means:

(A) for a debt secured by the debtor's residence, the debtor's residence address unless the debtor provided the mortgage servicer a written change of address before the date the mortgage servicer mailed a notice required by Section 51.002; or

(B) for a debt other than a debt described by Paragraph (A), the debtor's last known address as shown by the records of the mortgage servicer of the security instrument unless the debtor provided the current mortgage servicer a written change of address before the date the mortgage servicer mailed a notice required by Section 51.002.

(3) "Mortgage servicer" means the last person to whom a mortgagor has been instructed by the current mortgagee to send payments for the debt secured by a security instrument. A mortgagee may be the mortgage servicer.

(4) "Mortgagee" means:

(A) the grantee, beneficiary, owner, or holder of a security instrument;

(B) a book entry system; or

(C) if the security interest has been assigned of record, the last person to whom the security interest has been assigned of record.

(5) "Mortgagor" means the grantor of a security instrument.

(6) "Security instrument" means a deed of trust, mortgage, or other contract lien on an interest in real property.

(7) "Substitute trustee" means a person appointed by the current mortgagee or mortgage servicer under the terms of the security instrument to exercise the power of sale.

(8) "Trustee" means a person authorized to exercise the power of sale under the terms of a security instrument.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 554, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.

Sec. 51.001. EFFECT ON OTHER LIENS. Except as provided by Chapter 59, this subtitle does not affect:

(1) the right to create a lien by special contract or agreement; or

(2) a lien that is not treated in this subtitle, including a lien arising under common law, in equity, or under another statute of this state.

Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 3525, ch. 576, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1984.

Sec. 51.002. SALE OF REAL PROPERTY UNDER CONTRACT LIEN. (a) A sale of real property under a power of sale conferred by a deed of trust or other contract lien must be a public sale at auction held between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. of the first Tuesday of a month. Except as provided by Subsection (h), the sale must take place at the county courthouse in the county in which the land is located, or if the property is located in more than one county, the sale may be made at the courthouse in any county in which the property is located. The commissioners court shall designate the area at the courthouse where the sales are to take place and shall record the designation in the real property records of the county. The sale must occur in the designated area. If no area is designated by the commissioners court, the notice of sale must designate the area where the sale covered by that notice is to take place, and the sale must occur in that area.

(b) Notice of the sale, which must include a statement of the earliest time at which the sale will begin, must be given at least 21 days before the date of the sale by:

(1) posting at the courthouse door of each county in which the property is located a written notice designating the county in which the property will be sold;

(2) filing in the office of the county clerk of each county in which the property is located a copy of the notice posted under Subdivision (1); and

(3) serving written notice of the sale by certified mail on each debtor who, according to the records of the mortgage

servicer of the debt, is obligated to pay the debt.

(c) The sale must begin at the time stated in the notice of sale or not later than three hours after that time.

(d) Notwithstanding any agreement to the contrary, the mortgage servicer of the debt shall serve a debtor in default under a deed of trust or other contract lien on real property used as the debtor's residence with written notice by certified mail stating that the debtor is in default under the deed of trust or other contract lien and giving the debtor at least 20 days to cure the default before notice of sale can be given under Subsection (b). The entire calendar day on which the notice required by this subsection is given, regardless of the time of day at which the notice is given, is included in computing the 20-day notice period required by this subsection, and the entire calendar day on which notice of sale is given under Subsection (b) is excluded in computing the 20-day notice period.

(e) Service of a notice under this section by certified mail is complete when the notice is deposited in the United States mail, postage prepaid and addressed to the debtor at the debtor's last known address. The affidavit of a person knowledgeable of the facts to the effect that service was completed is prima facie evidence of service.

(f) Each county clerk shall keep all notices filed under Subdivision (2) of Subsection (b) in a convenient file that is available to the public for examination during normal business hours. The clerk may dispose of the notices after the date of sale specified in the notice has passed. The clerk shall receive a fee of \$2 for each notice filed.

(g) The entire calendar day on which the notice of sale is given, regardless of the time of day at which the notice is given, is included in computing the 21-day notice period required by Subsection (b), and the entire calendar day of the foreclosure sale is excluded.

(h) For the purposes of Subsection (a), the commissioners court of a county may designate an area other than an area at the courthouse where sales under this section will take place that is in a public place within a reasonable proximity of the county courthouse and in a location as accessible to the public as the courthouse door. The commissioners court shall record that designation in the real property records of the county. The posting of the notice required by Subsection (b)(1) of a sale designated under this subsection to take place at an area other than an area of the courthouse remains at the courthouse door of the appropriate county.

Acts 1983, 68th Leg., p. 3525, ch. 576, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1984. Amended by Acts 1984, 68th Leg., 2nd C.S., ch. 18, Sec. 3(b), eff. Oct. 2, 1984; Acts 1987, 70th Leg., ch. 540, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1988; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 48, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 554, Sec. 2, eff. Jan. 1, 2004; Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 533, Sec. 1, eff. June 17, 2005; Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 555, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2005.

Sec. 51.0021. NOTICE OF CHANGE OF ADDRESS REQUIRED. A debtor shall inform the mortgage servicer of the debt in a reasonable manner of any change of address of the debtor for purposes of providing notice to the debtor under Section 51.002.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 554, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.

Sec. 51.0025. ADMINISTRATION OF FORECLOSURE BY MORTGAGE SERVICER. A mortgage servicer may administer the foreclosure of property under Section 51.002 on behalf of a mortgagee if:

(1) the mortgage servicer and the mortgagee have entered into an agreement granting the current mortgage servicer authority to service the mortgage; and

(2) the notices required under Section 51.002(b) disclose

that the mortgage servicer is representing the mortgagee under a servicing agreement with the mortgagee and

the name of the mortgagee and:

(A) the address of the mortgagee; or

(B) the address of the mortgage servicer, if there is an agreement granting a mortgage servicer the authority to service the mortgage.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 554, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 2004. Amended by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 555, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2005.

Sec. 51.003. DEFICIENCY JUDGMENT. (a) If the price at which

real property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Section 51.002 is less than the unpaid balance of the indebtedness secured by the real property, resulting in a deficiency, any action brought to recover the deficiency must be brought within two years of the foreclosure sale and is governed by this section.

(b) Any person against whom such a recovery is sought by motion may request that the court in which the action is pending determine the fair market value of the real property as of the date of the foreclosure sale. The fair market value shall be determined by the finder of fact after the introduction by the parties of competent evidence of the value. Competent evidence of value may include, but is not limited to, the following: (1) expert opinion testimony; (2) comparable sales; (3) anticipated marketing time and holding costs; (4) cost of sale; and (5) the necessity and amount of any discount to be applied to the future sales price or the cashflow generated by the property to arrive at a current fair market value.

(c) If the court determines that the fair market value is greater than the sale price of the real property at the foreclosure sale, the persons against whom recovery of the deficiency is sought are entitled to an offset against the deficiency in the amount by which the fair market value, less the amount of any claim, indebtedness, or obligation of any kind that is secured by a lien or encumbrance on the real property that was not extinguished by the foreclosure, exceeds the sale price. If no party requests the determination of fair market value or if such a request is made and no competent evidence of fair market value is introduced, the sale price at the foreclosure sale shall be used to compute the deficiency.

(d) Any money received by a lender from a private mortgage guaranty insurer shall be credited to the account of the borrower prior to the lender bringing an action at law for any deficiency owed by the borrower. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the credit required by this subsection shall not apply to the exercise by a private mortgage guaranty insurer of its subrogation rights against a borrower or other person liable for any deficiency.

Added by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 12, Sec. 1, eff. April 1, 1991.

Sec. 51.004. JUDICIAL FORECLOSURE--DEFICIENCY. (a) This section applies if:

(1) real property subject to a deed of trust or other contract lien is sold at a foreclosure sale under a court judgment foreclosing the lien and ordering the sale; and

(2) the price at which the real property is sold is less than the unpaid balance of the indebtedness secured by the real property, resulting in a deficiency.

(b) Any person obligated on the indebtedness, including a guarantor, may bring an action in the district court in the county in which the real property is located for a determination of the fair market value of the real property as of the date of the foreclosure sale. The suit must be brought not later than the 90th day after the date of the foreclosure sale unless the suit is brought by a guarantor who did not receive actual notice of the sale before the date of sale, in which case the suit must be brought by the guarantor not later than the 90th day after the date the guarantor received actual notice of the sale. The fair market value shall be determined by the finder of fact after the introduction by the parties of competent evidence of the value. Competent evidence of value may include:

(1) expert opinion testimony;

(2) comparable sales;

(3) anticipated marketing time and holding costs;

(4) cost of sale; and

(5) the necessity and amount of any discount to be applied to the future sales price or the cash flow generated by the property to arrive at a fair market value as of the date of the foreclosure sale.

(c) If the finder of fact determines that the fair market value is greater than the sale price of the real property at the foreclosure sale, the persons obligated on the indebtedness, including guarantors, are entitled to an offset against the deficiency in the amount by which the fair market value, less the amount of any claim, indebtedness, or obligation of any kind that is secured by a lien or encumbrance on the real property that was not extinguished by the foreclosure, exceeds the sale price. If no competent evidence of fair market value is introduced, the sale

price at the foreclosure sale shall be used to compute the deficiency.

(d) Any money received by a lender from a private mortgage guaranty insurer shall be credited to the account of the borrower before the lender brings an action at law for any deficiency owed by the borrower. However, the credit required by this subsection does not apply to the exercise by a private mortgage guaranty insurer of its subrogation rights against a borrower or other person liable for any deficiency.

Added by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 361, Sec. 1, eff. June 5, 1991.

Sec. 51.005. JUDICIAL OR NONJUDICIAL FORECLOSURE AFTER JUDGMENT AGAINST GUARANTOR--DEFICIENCY. (a) This section applies if:

(1) the holder of a debt obtains a court judgment against a guarantor of the debt;

(2) real property subject to a deed of trust or other contract lien securing the guaranteed debt is sold at a foreclosure sale under Section 51.002 or under a court judgment foreclosing the lien and ordering the sale;

(3) the price at which the real property is sold is less than the unpaid balance of the indebtedness secured by the real property, resulting in a deficiency; and

(4) a motion or suit to determine the fair market value of the real property as of the date of the foreclosure sale has not been filed under Section 51.003 or 51.004.

(b) The guarantor may bring an action in the district court in the county in which the real property is located for a determination of the fair market value of the real property as of the date of the foreclosure sale. The suit must be brought not later than the 90th day after the date of the foreclosure sale or the date the guarantor receives actual notice of the foreclosure sale, whichever is later. The fair market value shall be determined by the finder of fact after the introduction by the parties of competent evidence of the value. Competent evidence of value may include:

(1) expert opinion testimony;

(2) comparable sales;

(3) anticipated marketing time and holding costs;

(4) cost of sale; and

(5) the necessity and amount of any discount to be applied to the future sales price or the cash flow generated by the property to arrive at a fair market value as of the date of the foreclosure sale.

(c) If the finder of fact determines that the fair market value is greater than the sale price of the real property at the foreclosure sale, the persons obligated on the indebtedness, including guarantors, are entitled to an offset against the deficiency in the amount by which the fair market value, less the amount of any claim, indebtedness, or obligation of any kind that is secured by a lien or encumbrance on the real property that was not extinguished by the foreclosure, exceeds the sale price. If no competent evidence of fair market value is introduced, the sale price at the foreclosure sale shall be used to compute the deficiency.

(d) Any money received by a lender from a private mortgage guaranty insurer shall be credited to the account of the borrower before the lender brings an action at law for any deficiency owed by the borrower. However, the credit required by this subsection does not apply to the exercise by a private mortgage guaranty insurer of its subrogation rights against a borrower or other person liable for any deficiency.

Added by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 361, Sec. 1, eff. June 5, 1991.

Sec. 51.006. DEED-OF-TRUST FORECLOSURE AFTER DEED IN LIEU OF FORECLOSURE. (a) This section applies to a holder of a debt under a deed of trust who accepts from the debtor a deed conveying real property subject to the deed of trust in satisfaction of the debt.

(b) The holder of a debt may void a deed conveying real property in satisfaction of the debt before the fourth anniversary of the date the deed is executed and foreclosed under the original deed of trust if:

(1) the debtor fails to disclose to the holder of the debt a lien or other encumbrance on the property before executing the deed conveying the property to the holder of the debt in satisfaction of the debt; and

(2) the holder of the debt has no personal knowledge of

the undisclosed lien or encumbrance on the property.

(c) A third party may conclusively rely upon the affidavit of the holder of a debt stating that the holder has voided the deed as provided in this section.

(d) If the holder elects to void a deed in lieu of foreclosure as provided in this section, the priority of its deed of trust shall not be affected or impaired by the execution of the deed in lieu of foreclosure.

(e) If a holder accepts a deed in lieu of foreclosure, the holder may foreclose its deed of trust as provided in said deed of trust without electing to void the deed. The priority of such deed of trust shall not be affected or impaired by the deed in lieu of foreclosure.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 1020, Sec. 1, eff. Aug. 28, 1995.

Sec. 51.007. TRUSTEE UNDER DEED OF TRUST, CONTRACT LIEN OR SECURITY INSTRUMENT. (a) The trustee named in a suit or proceeding may plead in the answer that the trustee is not a necessary party by a verified denial stating the basis for the trustee's reasonable belief that the trustee was named as a party solely in the capacity as a trustee under a deed of trust, contract lien, or security instrument.

(b) Within 30 days after the filing of the trustee's verified denial, a verified response is due from all parties to the suit or proceeding setting forth all matters, whether in law or fact, that rebut the trustee's verified denial.

(c) If a party has no objection or fails to file a timely verified response to the trustee's verified denial, the trustee shall be dismissed from the suit or proceeding without prejudice.

(d) If a respondent files a timely verified response to the trustee's verified denial, the matter shall be set for hearing. The court shall dismiss the trustee from the suit or proceeding without prejudice if the court determines that the trustee is not a necessary party.

(e) A dismissal of the trustee pursuant to Subsections (c) and (d) shall not prejudice a party's right to seek injunctive relief to prevent the trustee from proceeding with a foreclosure sale.

(f) A trustee shall not be liable for any good faith error resulting from reliance on any information in law or fact provided by the mortgagor or mortgagee or their respective attorney, agent, or representative or other third party.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1304, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Sec. 51.0075. AUTHORITY OF TRUSTEE OR SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEE. (a) A trustee or substitute trustee may set reasonable conditions for conducting the public sale if the conditions are announced before bidding is opened for the first sale of the day held by the trustee or substitute trustee.

(b) A trustee or substitute trustee is not a debt collector.

(c) Notwithstanding any agreement to the contrary, a mortgagee may appoint or may authorize a mortgage servicer to appoint a substitute trustee or substitute trustees to succeed to all title, powers, and duties of the original trustee. A mortgagee or mortgage servicer may make an appointment or authorization under this subsection by power of attorney, corporate resolution, or other written instrument.

(d) A mortgage servicer may authorize an attorney to appoint a substitute trustee or substitute trustees on behalf of a mortgagee under Subsection (c).

(e) The name and a street address for a trustee or substitute trustees shall be disclosed on the notice required by Section 51.002(b).

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 554, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.
Amended by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 1231, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2005.

Sec. 51.008. CERTAIN LIENS ON REAL PROPERTY. (a) A lien on real property created under this code or another law of this state in favor of a governmental entity must be recorded as provided by Chapters 11 and 12 in the real property records of the county in which the property or a portion of the property is located unless:

(1) the lien is imposed as a result of failure to pay:

(A) ad valorem taxes; or

(B) a penalty or interest owed in connection with those taxes; or

(2) the law establishing the lien expressly states that recording the lien is not required.

(b) Any notice of the lien required by law must contain a legal description of the property.

(c) This section does not apply to:

(1) a lien created under Section 89.083, Natural Resources Code;

(2) a state tax lien under Chapter 113, Tax Code; or

(3) a lien established under Chapter 61 or 213, Labor Code.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 827, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 51.009. FORECLOSED PROPERTY SOLD "AS IS". A purchaser at a sale of real property under Section 51.002:

(1) acquires the foreclosed property "as is" without any expressed or implied warranties, except as to warranties of title, and at the purchaser's own risk; and

(2) is not a consumer.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 554, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.