

Article 27A.

Appeals and Transfers From the Clerk.

§ 1-301.1. Appeal of clerk's decision in civil actions.

(a) **Applicability.** – This section applies to orders or judgments entered by the clerk of superior court in civil actions in which the clerk exercises the judicial powers of that office. If this section conflicts with a specific provision of the General Statutes, that specific provision of the General Statutes controls.

(b) **Appeal of Clerk's Order or Judgment.** – A party aggrieved by an order or judgment entered by the clerk may, within 10 days of entry of the order or judgment, appeal to the appropriate court for a trial or hearing de novo. The order or judgment of the clerk remains in effect until it is modified or replaced by an order or judgment of a judge. Notice of appeal shall be filed with the clerk in writing. Notwithstanding the service requirement of G.S. 1A-1, Rule 58, orders of the clerk shall be served on other parties only if otherwise required by law. A judge of the court to which the appeal lies or the clerk may issue a stay of the order or judgment upon the appellant's posting of an appropriate bond set by the judge or clerk issuing the stay.

(c) **Duty of Judge on Appeal.** – Upon appeal, the judge may hear and determine all matters in controversy in the civil action, unless it appears to the judge that any of the following apply:

- (1) The matter is one that involves an action that can be taken only by a clerk.
- (2) Justice would be more efficiently administered by the judge's disposing of only the matter appealed.

When either subdivision (1) or subdivision (2) of this subsection applies, the judge shall dispose of the matter appealed and remand the action to the clerk. When subdivision (1) of this subsection applies, the judge may order the clerk to take the action.

(d) **Judge's Concurrent Authority Not Affected.** – If both the judge and the clerk are authorized by law to enter an order or judgment in a matter in controversy, a party may seek to have the judge determine the matter in controversy initially. (Rev. s. 529; C.S., s. 558; 1971, c. 381, s. 12; 1999-216, s. 1.)

§ 1-301.2. Transfer or appeal of special proceedings; exceptions.

(a) **Applicability.** – This section applies to special proceedings heard by the clerk of superior court in the exercise of the judicial powers of that office. If this section conflicts with a specific provision of the General Statutes, that specific provision of the General Statutes controls.

(b) **Transfer.** – Except as provided in subsections (g) and (h) of this section, when an issue of fact, an equitable defense, or a request for equitable relief is raised in a pleading in a special proceeding or in a pleading or written motion in an adoption proceeding, the clerk shall transfer the proceeding to the appropriate court. In court, the proceeding is subject to the provisions in the General Statutes and to the rules that apply to actions initially filed in that court.

(c) **Duty of Judge on Transfer.** – Whenever a special proceeding is transferred to a court pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, the judge may hear and determine all matters in controversy in the special proceeding, unless it appears to the judge that justice would be more efficiently administered by the judge's disposing of only the matter leading to the transfer and remanding the special proceeding to the clerk.

(d) Clerk to Decide All Issues. – If a special proceeding is not transferred or is remanded to the clerk after an appeal or transfer, the clerk shall decide all matters in controversy to dispose of the proceeding.

(e) Appeal of Clerk's Decisions. – A party aggrieved by an order or judgment of a clerk that finally disposed of a special proceeding, may, within 10 days of entry of the order or judgment, appeal to the appropriate court for a hearing de novo. Under G.S. 46A-85(a), however, a party may appeal an order confirming the partition sale of real property within 10 days of the order becoming final. Notice of appeal shall be in writing and shall be filed with the clerk. The order or judgment of the clerk remains in effect until it is modified or replaced by an order or judgment of a judge. A judge of the court to which the appeal lies or the clerk may issue a stay of the order or judgment upon the appellant's posting of an appropriate bond set by the judge or clerk issuing the stay. Any matter previously transferred and determined by the court shall not be relitigated in a hearing de novo under this subsection.

(f) Service. – Notwithstanding the service requirement of G.S. 1A-1, Rule 58, orders of the clerk shall be served on other parties only if otherwise required by law.

(g) Exception for Incompetency and Foreclosure Proceedings and Proceedings to Permit Sterilization for Medical Necessity. –

(1) Proceedings for adjudication of incompetency or restoration of competency under Chapter 35A of the General Statutes, or proceedings to determine whether a guardian may consent to the sterilization of a ward with a mental illness or intellectual disability under G.S. 35A-1245, shall not be transferred even if an issue of fact, an equitable defense, or a request for equitable relief is raised. Appeals from orders entered in these proceedings are governed by Chapter 35A of the General Statutes to the extent that the provisions of that Chapter conflict with this section.

(2) Foreclosure proceedings under Article 2A of Chapter 45 of the General Statutes shall not be transferred even if an issue of fact, an equitable defense, or a request for equitable relief is raised. Equitable issues may be raised only as provided in G.S. 45-21.34. Appeals from orders entered in these proceedings are governed by Article 2A of Chapter 45 of the General Statutes to the extent that the provisions of that Article conflict with this section.

(h) Exception for Partition Proceedings. – Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, the issue whether to order the actual partition or the sale in lieu of partition of real property that is the subject of a partition proceeding shall not be transferred and shall be determined by the clerk. The clerk's order determining this issue, though not a final order, may be appealed pursuant to subsection (e) of this section. (C.C.P., c. 115; Code, s. 256; 1903, c. 566; Rev., ss. 588, 717; C.S., ss. 634, 758; 1971, c. 381, s. 12; 1995, c. 88, s. 2; 1999-216, s. 1; 2003-13, s. 2; 2009-362, s. 5; 2018-47, s. 1(a); 2020-23, s. 4.)

§ 1-301.3. Appeal of trust and estate matters determined by clerk.

(a) Applicability. – This section applies to matters arising in the administration of trusts and of estates of decedents, incompetents, and minors. G.S. 1-301.2 applies in the conduct of a special proceeding when a special proceeding is required in a matter relating to the administration of an estate.

(b) Clerk to Decide Estate Matters. – In matters covered by this section, the clerk shall determine all issues of fact and law. The clerk shall enter an order or judgment, as appropriate, containing findings of fact and conclusions of law supporting the order or judgment.

(c) Appeal to Superior Court. – A party aggrieved by an order or judgment of the clerk may appeal to the superior court by filing a written notice of the appeal with the clerk within 10 days of entry of the order or judgment after service of the order on that party. The notice of appeal shall contain a short and plain statement of the basis for the appeal. Unless otherwise provided by law, a judge of the superior court or the clerk may issue a stay of the order or judgment upon the appellant's posting an appropriate bond set by the judge or clerk issuing the stay. While the appeal is pending, the clerk retains authority to enter orders affecting the administration of the estate, subject to any order entered by a judge of the superior court limiting that authority.

(d) Duty of Judge on Appeal. – Upon appeal, the judge of the superior court shall review the order or judgment of the clerk for the purpose of determining only the following:

- (1) Whether the findings of fact are supported by the evidence.
- (2) Whether the conclusions of law are supported by the findings of facts.
- (3) Whether the order or judgment is consistent with the conclusions of law and applicable law.

It is not necessary for a party to object to the admission or exclusion of evidence before the clerk in order to preserve the right to assign error on appeal to its admission or exclusion. If the judge finds prejudicial error in the admission or exclusion of evidence, the judge, in the judge's discretion, shall either remand the matter to the clerk for a subsequent hearing or resolve the matter on the basis of the record. If the record is insufficient, the judge may receive additional evidence on the factual issue in question. The judge may continue the case if necessary to allow the parties time to prepare for a hearing to receive additional evidence.

(e) Remand After Disposition of Issue on Appeal. – The judge, upon determining the matter appealed from the clerk, shall remand the case to the clerk for such further action as is necessary to administer the estate.

(f) Recording of Estate Matters. – In the discretion of the clerk or upon request by a party, all hearings and other matters covered by this section shall be recorded by an electronic recording device. A transcript of the proceedings may be ordered by a party, by the clerk, or by the presiding judge. If a recordation is not made, the clerk shall submit to the superior court a summary of the evidence presented to the clerk. (1999-216, s. 1; 2011-344, s. 1.)