#### Demystifying Mortgage Escrow: Only Slightly Less Complicated Than The BCS System

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Demystifying Mortgage Escrow

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## **RESPA** - Introduction

 RESPA places limits on the amount a lender or servicer may require a mortgagor to keep in his or her escrow account to cover the payment of taxes, insurance or other disbursements





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#### **RESPA - Introduction**

- RESPA governs servicer's obligations to provide annual escrow account statement (i.e., escrow analysis) and notice "not less than annually" of any shortage in the escrow account
- RESPA regulation: 24 CFR § 3500
  - Sometimes referred to as Regulation X



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# Escrow Account – Definition(s)

- Any account servicer establishes or controls on behalf of borrower to pay taxes, insurance premiums (including flood insurance), or other charges with respect to a federally related mortgage loan
  - Including charges borrower and servicer have voluntarily agreed servicer should collect and pay
  - Definition encompasses any account established for this purpose, including a "trust account", "reserve account", "impound account", or other term in different localities



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# Escrow Account – Definition(s)

- "Escrow Account" includes any arrangement where servicer adds a portion of the borrower's payments to principal and subsequently deducts from principal the disbursements for escrow account items
- The term "Escrow Account" does <u>not</u> include any account that is under the borrower's total control





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#### **Escrow Statements**

- A servicer who establishes an escrow account in connection with a "federally related mortgage" must provide borrower a statement which clearly itemizes the estimated taxes, insurance premiums, and other charges that are reasonably anticipated to be paid from the escrow account during the first twelve months after the escrow account is created.
  - This statement must be provided to borrower either at closing, or within 45 days after creation of escrow account
  - If loan documents do not specifically establish an escrow account, whether a servicer may establish an escrow account for the loan is determined by State law

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#### **Escrow Statements**

- A servicer who has established or continued an escrow account must provide the borrower with statement at least once for each 12-month period
  - Otherwise known as the "escrow account computation year"
    - Regulation X defines the term "escrow account computation year" as a 12-month period that a servicer establishes for the escrow account beginning with the borrower's initial payment date. The term includes each 12-month period thereafter, unless a servicer chooses to issue a short year statement under the conditions stated in § 3500.17(i)(4).



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#### **Escrow Statements**

An escrow statement should clearly itemize:

- amount of borrower's current monthly payment
- portion of monthly payment being placed in escrow account
- total amount paid into escrow account during the period
- total amount paid out of escrow account during the period for taxes, insurance premiums and other charges (as separately identified)
- the balance in the escrow account at the end of the period
- an explanation of how any surplus is being handled by the servicer
- an explanation of how any shortage or deficiency is to be paid by the borrower; and
- if applicable, the reason(s) why the estimated low monthly balance was not reached, as indicated by noting differences between the most recent account history and last year's projection



## **Escrow Analysis Definition**

An escrow analysis is the accounting servicer conducts in the form of a trial running balance for an escrow account to:

- Determine appropriate target balances
- Compute borrower's monthly payments for the next escrow account computation year and any deposits needed to establish or maintain the account; and
- Determine whether shortages, surpluses or deficiencies exist

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#### **Escrow Analysis**

#### There are five steps to complete an escrow analysis:

#### Steps 1-3

- Servicer projects a trial balance for the account as a whole over the next computation year (a trial running balance).
- In doing so servicer assumes that it will make estimated disbursements on or before the earlier of the deadline to take advantage of discounts (if available) or the deadline to avoid a penalty.
- Servicer also assumes borrower will make monthly payments equal to one-twelfth of the estimated total annual escrow account disbursements.

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#### **Escrow Analysis**

#### Step 4

- Servicer examines monthly trial balances
  - Adds to the first monthly balance an amount just sufficient to bring the lowest monthly trial balance to zero
  - ☐ Adjusts all other monthly balances accordingly.





#### **Escrow Analysis**

#### Step 5

- Servicer adds to the monthly balances the permissible cushion.
  - ☐ Cushion is:
    - ☐ Two months of borrower's escrow payments to servicer
    - Or a lesser amount specified by State law
    - ☐ Or a lesser amount specified by the mortgage document





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#### Escrow Analysis - Step 1

- The first step in the analysis is to list all anticipated disbursements to be paid out of escrow account over the next 12 months
- Example assumes \$1200 for property taxes (\$500 paid July 25 and \$700 paid December 10) and \$360 for hazard insurance on September 20.

County Taxes \$1,200.00 Homeowner's Insurance \$ 360.00

Total \$1,560.00

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#### Escrow Analysis - Step 1

How does a servicer estimate disbursements for next year?

- If servicer knows the charge for an escrow item in the next computation year, then servicer uses that amount in estimating disbursement amounts
- If the charge is unknown to servicer, servicer may base the estimate on:
  - Preceding year's charge
  - Or preceding year's charge as modified by an amount not exceeding the most recent year's change in the national Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI, all items)



#### Escrow Analysis - Step 2

Second step in analysis is to calculate the regular monthly escrow component (i.e., what is needed on a monthly basis to cover the anticipated disbursements over the next 12 months)

- This is done by dividing the total from Step 1 by twelve (12) monthly payments
- In our example:



\$1,560 / 12 = \$130



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#### Escrow Analysis - Step 3

Third step in escrow analysis requires servicer to create trial running balance for the next twelve (12) months

- This requires listing:
  - All payments <u>into</u> escrow account
  - All payments <u>out of</u> account
  - When the anticipated disbursements from Step 1 are expected to be paid

In preparing the statement, servicer *may* assume scheduled payments/disbursements will be made for the final 2 months of escrow account computation year (the operative word is "may")

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#### Escrow Analysis - Step 4

Step 4 requires servicer to increase all monthly balances to bring the lowest point in the account up to zero

- This is sometimes referred to as the "theoretical low point"
- Usually low point comes in the month property taxes have been paid
- In our example, the low point comes in December (-780)





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From Page 8 of Escrow 101



## Escrow Analysis - Step 5

Step 5 directs servicer to add any cushion lender requires to the monthly balances

- The cushion may be a maximum of one-sixth of the total escrow charges anticipated over the next 12 months
  - If loan documents provide for lower cushion limits than under the Regulation, then the terms of the loan documents apply





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#### Escrow Analysis – Step 5

If loan document is silent on escrow account limits, and servicer establishes an escrow account under State law, then the limitations under the Regulation apply unless State law provides for a lower amount.







#### Escrow Analysis - Step 5

If the loan documents provide for escrow accounts up to the RESPA limits, then the servicer may require the maximum amounts consistent with the Regulation, unless an applicable State law sets a lower amount

- In our example, 1/6 of \$1,560 = \$260.00
- Following the RESPA / HUD guidelines, the maximum the servicer could require in the escrow account is \$1,040



W. Jeffrey



Michael J.

		payment	disbursement	balance
	Jun	-	-	1040
	Jul	130	500	670
	Aug	130	0	800
	Sep	130	360	570
	Oct	130	0	700
	Nov	130	0	830
	DEC	130	700	* 260
	Jan	130	0	390
	Feb	130	0	520
	Mar	130	0	650
	Apr	130	0	780
	May	130	0	910
From Page 9 of Escrow 101	Jun	130	0	1040



#### Escrow Analysis - Step 5

Is servicer required to have borrower maintain a reserve or cushion?

- □ NO. See Reg. X Section (c)(1)(ii).
  - Throughout the life of a nescrow account, the servicer may charge the borrower a monthly sum equal to one-twelfth (1/12) of the total annual escrow payments which the servicer reasonably anticipates paying from the account. In addition, the servicer may add an amount to maintain a cushion no greater than one-sixth (1/6) of the estimated total annual payments from the servicer. payments from the account
- ☐ The operative word in this paragraph is "may"



#### Escrow Analysis - Surpluses

#### Surpluses

After analysis is performed, servicer then compares "required" amount (otherwise known as the "target balance") to the actual account at the time the escrow analysis was being performed

- If the amount in the escrow account <u>exceeds</u> required amount, then there is a "surplus" in the escrow account
  - If surplus is less than \$50, servicer may:
    - Apply surplus to reduce amount of escrow payment
    - Or may choose to return surplus to borrower



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#### Escrow Analysis - Surpluses

#### **Surpluses**

If surplus is more than \$50, servicer must return surplus to borrower within 30 days of performing escrow analysis

- These rules for handling a surplus only apply if borrower is current at the time of the escrow analysis
  - Borrower is considered current if servicer receives borrower's payments within 30 days of payment due date
- If servicer does not receive borrower's payment within 30 days of payment due date, then servicer may retain surplus in the escrow account pursuant to terms of the loan documents

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#### Escrow Analysis -Shortages

#### **Shortages**

If amount in escrow account is positive, <u>but less than the required amount</u>, there is an escrow shortage

- If amount of escrow shortage is less than one month's escrow payment, servicer may ask borrower to pay shortage within 30 days, or servicer may spread it out over 12 months
- If shortage is greater than one month's escrow payment, servicer must spread the shortage out over at least 12 months
- Servicer may also do nothing and allow an escrow shortage to exist

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#### Escrow Analysis - Deficiencies

#### **Deficiencies**

If amount in escrow account not only falls below the required amount, but is negative, then there is an escrow <u>deficiency</u>

- If amount of deficiency is less than one monthly escrow payment, servicer may require borrower to pay deficiency within 30 days
- If amount of deficiency is equal to or greater than one monthly escrow payment, servicer may require borrower to repay amount over 2-12 months
- Servicer also has the option to allow the deficiency to exist and do nothing to change it.

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#### Escrow Analysis - Deficiencies

#### **Deficiencies**

The provisions regarding deficiencies apply only if borrower is current at the time servicer is performing escrow account analysis

- Borrower is considered current under the Regulation if servicer receives borrower's payments within 30 days of payment due date
- If servicer does not receive borrower's payment within 30 days of payment due date, servicer may recover deficiency pursuant to terms in loan documents

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## Escrow Analyses During A Bankruptcy Case

Section (f)(5) requires servicer to provide borrower notice of any shortage or deficiency in escrow account on at least an annual basis

- Therefore, any exception or exemption from having to provide an annual escrow statement, such as delinquency of loan or bankruptcy of borrower, <u>does not excuse servicer</u> from obligation to provide notice of escrow shortage or deficiency on at least an annual basis
- The Regulation also provides that if servicer advances funds for borrower, then servicer must perform an escrow account analysis before seeking repayment of deficiency

1	0

# vs. The United States Bankruptcy Code



## Escrow Analyses During A Bankruptcy Case

Traditionally (i.e., since the mid-90s), servicers have included only escrow deficiency in Proofs of Claim

- This practice resulted from several cases\* which vaguely required servicers to bring escrow account up to zero
  - Bringing escrow account to zero is only half the battle – still need to fund next year's disbursements/required cushions

**Now**, the trend is to include at least part of shortage in the claim.



\*In re Davideit, 1995 WL 912451 (Bkrtcy. D.N.H) \*In re McCormack, 1996 WL 753938 (D.N.H.)

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## First Example



Destj.

Each year, we review your earnow account to make sure the encrow portion of your achedaded mortgage payment covers you properly into marked processors promises. Herease or document in your stress altered and of minutesses premises many for the processors of the processor of the processo

New payment effective date June 01, 2013	Current psyment(\$)	New psymeat (\$)	
Principal and/or interest Excrow payment New encrow shortage/prepayment <sup>2</sup>	657.75 199.21	65735 0.00	
Optional insurance	95.95	25.95	
Total payment amount	882.91	889,02	

2. If your current payment includes an amount to corer a previous encrow shortage, this amount will be added. If your current payment includes an adjustment for extra funds you deposted to your encrow account, this amount will be deducted. You account in the balance, Our addition has resulted in no prejected therings or coverage in your sectors account.

			For informational purposes	Loan numb	er:
h- 6-11			projected escrow account activity fro		
				om Jun 2013 to May 2	1014
		t disbursemen from your escre			
		from your escre			
HAZARD IN			385.65		
COUNTY TA Total disburs			2,078.17		
			2,463.82		
Scheduled e			205.321		
Your escrow p	ayment is calci	ulated by dividing	he total disbursements by 12.		
rojected esc	crow accoun	t activity for the	ne next 12 months		
	Anticipated	payments (\$)		Escrow ba	lance (\$)
Pate	To escrow	From escrow	Description	Projected	Required
un 2013			Starting balance	1,984,70	2,053.18
un 2013	205.32	0.00		2,190.02	2,258,50
ul 2013	205.32	385.65	USAA GROUP	2,009.69	2,078.17
ug 2013	205.32	0.00		2,215.01	2,283.49
ep 2013	205.32	2,078.17	COBB COUNTY	342.16 <sup>2</sup>	410.64
let 2013	20532	0.00		547.48	615.96
lov 2013	205.32	0.00		752.80	821.28
lec 2013	205.32	0.00		958.12	1,026.60
an 2014	205,32	0.00		1,163.44	1,231.92
eb 2014	205.32	0.00		1,368.76	1,437.24
isr 2014	205.32	0.00		1,574.08	1,642.56
pr 2014	205.32	0.00		1,779.40	1,847.88
lay 2014	205.32	0.00		1,984.72	2,053.20
Total	2,463.84	2,463.82			
		activity is based o is will be received:	n the most recent tax and/or insurance inform	sation available as well as	the
			wal period at which the projected escrow bala		
			ated disbursements, including increases to to		
month minimu ssurance.	m escrow bala	nce allowable by st	ate law and/or your mortgage contract. This o	amount does not include n	tortgage
		scrow balance is #			
· State law i	requires that th	its minimum eacros	balance not exceed \$420.64 ge (ARM), you will receive a notice about you		
ARM rate	is scheduled to	chance.	де (илия, учи мил лесение а ловсе аком учи	new mongage payment i	when your
	1				
	about your e	scrow account	no major) (4)	342.16	
nformation					
our lowest pro					
our lowest pro	ljustment«(#			68.48	

Page 3 of 3 For informational purposes Loan number: The following information covers your escrow account history activity from Jul 2012 to May 2013

Payments to escrow (\$)		Payments from escrow (\$)			Escrow balance (\$)		
Date	Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual	Description	Projected	Actual
Jul 2012					Starting balance	2,191.26	1,805.61
Jul 2012	199.21	199.21	308.52	0.001	USAA GROUP	2,081.95	2,004.82
Aug 2012	199.21	199.21	0.00	0.00		2,281.16	2,204.03
Sep 2012	199.21	199.21	2,081.95	2,078.171	COBB COUNTY	398.42	325.07
Oct 2012	199.21	199.21	0.00	0.00		597.63	524.28
Nov 2012	199.21	199.21	0.00	0.00		796.84	723.49
Dec 2012	199.21	265.16 <sup>1</sup>	0.00	0.00		996.05	988.65
Jan 2013	199.21	199.21	0.00	0.00		1,195.26	1,187.86
Feb 2013	199.21	199.21	0.00	0.00		1,394.47	1,387.07
Mar 2013	199.21	199.21	0.00	0.00		1,593.68	1,586.28
Apr 2013	199.21	199.21	0.00	0.00		1,792.89	1,785.49
May 2013	199.21	199.21	0.00	0.00		1,992.10	1,984.70
Totals	2,191.31	2,257.26	2,390.47	2,078.17			

1. Indicates where a difference exists between the projected and actual account activity.







Monthly Home Loan Payment
Current Payment



#### 



Escrow: Taxes and Insura	nce Statement
Loan Number	
Statement Date	06/03/2013
Review Period	03/2013 to 05/2013
Escrow Shortage	\$0.00

Important Message
If you are in bankingsty or have been given a dechage for your benicutely, the letter is for telemedian only. This letter is not an elitempt to coloical doth, it is not an elitempt to coloical doth, and is not an elitempt to coloical doth, and is not an elitempt to coloical doth, and is not enterprised to the colors and or part of the dether to have, assess or movever all or part of the dether to the tradeous power part of the dether to the tradeous.

You have exactly the amount of money in your excrew account needed to pay your estimated property taxes and/or insutance for next year. Keep this statement for your records. You do not need to do anything else.

Your monthly payment will be \$1,704.80 starting 05/01/13,

Balancing Your Escrow Account
There needs to be enough more proving record account to pay your properly taxes and/or insurance. To do that, federal law allows us to require that, you were primitive balance in your count. This cash reserve holes to cover any increase in taxes and/or insurance. Subject to safe law limits, your minimum balance normally equals the amount of your escore payments for about two months.

The payments made to and from your escow account last year help predict your account activity for next year. This year's activity also helps predict what your lowest account balance is likely to be.<sup>1</sup>

To belience your escrow account, we compare what your lowest account belience will likely be next year with your minimum equired belience. If there is no difference between the numbers, your escrow account is belienced.

90.00	Your escrow account is balanced
\$-264.28 Your estimated lowest account balance for 20	
9632.14	Your minimum required balance

<sup>1</sup>See the "Estimated Escrow Account Activity" chart in this statement.

The chart below compares this year's activity on your ecrow account with our estimates. The estimated amounts came from your last ecrow account moles.

- Your most recent mortgage payment due was \$1,388.75. Your mortgage payment includes principal and interest \$1,388.73 and escrow money \$0.02.

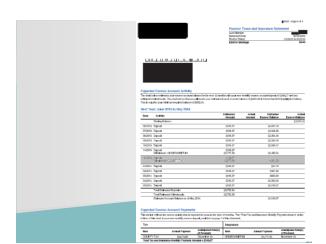
■ At the time of your less recrow account review, your expected basest belance was \$552.14. The chart belan shows that your actual basest excrow belance was \$752.54.

Note charges in people twee or insurance premiums could the difference between the collimated and actual amounts in the chart. An 'E' in the chart below means expected activity that been't occurred yet.

'Indicates a difference between the estimated and actual amounts.

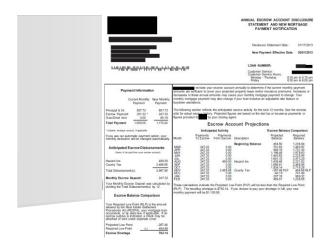
This Yea	ar: March 2013 to May 201
Date	Activity

Date	Activity	Estimated Amount	Actual Amount	Estimated Escrow Balance	Actual Escrow Balance
	Starting Balance			\$1,264.33	\$399.8
03/2013	Deposit	\$316.07	\$388.11 *	\$1,580.40	\$787.94
04/2013	Deposit	\$316.07	\$528.16 *	\$1,896.47	\$1,316.10
05/2013	Deposit	\$316.07	90.00 *	\$2,212.54	\$1,316.10
06/2013	Deposit	\$316.07	90.02 E	\$2,528.61	\$1,316.12
07/2013	Deposit	\$316.07	90.00 *	\$2,844.68	\$0.00
08/2013	Deposit	\$316.07	90.00 *	\$3,160.75	\$0.00
09/2013	Deposit	\$316.07	90.00 *	\$3,476.82	\$0.00
10/2013	Deposit	\$316.07	90.00 *	\$3,792.89	\$0.00
11/2013	Deposit Withdrawal - HOMEOWNER IN	\$316.07 \$1,717.00	90.00 * 90.00 *	\$2,391.96	SOLO
12/2013	Deposit Withdrawall - COUNTY TAX	\$316.07 \$2.075.89	90.00 *	9632.14	\$0.00
01/2014	Deposit	\$316.07	90.00 *	S948.21	\$0.00
02/2014	Deposit	\$316.07	90.00 *	\$1,264.28	\$0.00
	Total Deposits	\$3,792.84	\$916.29		
	Total Withdrawals	\$3,792.89	\$0.00		
	Account Balance as of 05/2013				\$1,316.12





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17/14   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   100   10	
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Fourth Example	



Continuation of

#### **Escrow Account History**

The following is a review of your section account activity. It also compares the projections from your less review with the actual payments made from your section account.

(1) An asterial includes a difference between your projected and actually account activity.

(2) The payment or obtoperment has not yet occurred, but it existed to occur as shown.

Month	Payments to Escrow		Payments from Escrow			Escrow Balance		
	Projected	Actual	Projected	Description	Actual	Description	Projected	Actual
MAD	201.22	204.22				Beginning Balance	1,006.61	1,006.61
MAR APR	201.32 201.32 201.32	201.32 201.32 201.32					1,409.25 1,610.57	1,409.25 1,610.57
MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB	201.32	0.00					1.811.89	1,610.57 1,610.57
AUG	201 32 201 32 201 32 201 32	201.32 201.32	439.00	Hazard Ins	499.00	*Hazard Ins	2,013.21 1,775.53 1,976.85	1,312.89
OCT	201.32	201.32	1.976.85	County Tax	2.468.95	*County Tax	2,178.17 402.64	1,514.21 -753.42
JAN JAN	201.32 201.32 201.32	0.00 * 1.006.60 E					603.96 805.28	-753.42 253.18
FEB	201.32	201.32 E					1.006.60	253.18 454.50



# Escrow Analyses During A Bankruptcy Case

Trustees should expect servicers to run an escrow analysis each year while the case is pending and raise/decrease the payment\* as necessary because of shortages or changes in the disbursement amounts.



W. Jeffrey Collier Attorney Representing Chapter 13 Trustee for the Northern District of Mississippi Locke D. Barkley (Jackson, MS)

\*In re Hosley, 2008 WL 5169552 (N.D.N.Y.) \*In re Cole, 202 B.R. 375 (Bankr. F.D. Pa. 1996)







Michael J. McCormick



W. Jeffrey
Collier

Demystifying Mortgage Escrow

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## **Demystifying Mortgage Escrow**

This and other resources can be found at ConsiderChapter13.org

Thank you for joining the webinar.