

Columbia Falls passes bear law that centers on securing garbage



READ MORE

1
n

A black bear lays low in this file photo.

June 14, 2023 7:05 AM

@media (max-width: 767.98px){ .d-mobile-block { display: block !important; } }

By CHRIS PETERSON

Hungry Horse News

The Columbia Falls City Council approved a new “bear law” last week. Rather than write a separate ordinance, the city amended its existing litter law.

The new section states, “It is unlawful for a resident, association of residents, or a business to act or fail to act in such a way that results in the accumulation of uncollected refuse, garbage, or rubbish in or on areas of their owned or leased property such that it is readily accessible to undomesticated large predator animals, ncluding but not limited to black bears or grizzly bears.”

No one from the public spoke against the law.

Separately, the council passed a resolution that encourages the public to be more bear aware.

While the resolution doesn’t have the weight of law, it is a guiding document in bear and other city wildlife policy.

The resolution encourages residents to:

- a. Properly securing and storing domestic animal food overnight;
- b. Properly storing all garbage and recycling indoors, in animal resistant containers, or secured at curbside placement areas;
- c. Remove ripe fruit from trees and areas around trees that are accessed by bears and other animals. Do not deliberately leave fruit or other food for animals;
- d. Store garbage roll out indoors until morning of scheduled pick up; and,
- e. Secure chicken coops and other small livestock such as apiaries, and add scare devices, electric fence, if needed to deter bear activity.

Section Two. The City Council declares their intent to work on education efforts with People and Carnivores as well as working on an assessment of problem areas and assist with appropriate prevention measures.

People and Carnivores is a nonprofit organization that helps communities with bear and other carnivore conflicts, such as mountain lions. It helps both

with education and with funding.

Local representative Ryan Wilbur said the organization, for example, can help the city with cost sharing for things like bear-resistant garbage cans and educational outreach.

“We’re willing to work and help in any way that makes sense for the community,” Wilbur told council.

Evergreen Disposal plans on helping the city as well. The company has invested in more bear-resistant garbage containers that can be picked up by its trucks. It also has large commercial bear resistant containers available as well.

Folks can get the new bear resistant containers for a nominal \$5 a month additional fee. The fee is necessary because the cost for a bear-resistant container is about \$275 to \$350 apiece.

The vote for the new law and resolution was unanimous.

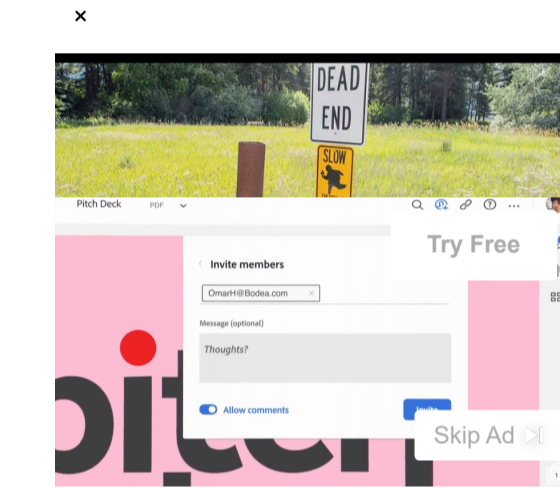
“I fully agree with the way this was put together,” Mayor Don Barnhart said. “The ordinance is something that can be enforced.”

The law came about after the city saw numerous grizzly and black bears getting into garbage and other attractants last fall, particularly on the east side of town.

As a result, the city passed an emergency ordinance that required folks properly take care of their garbage, chicken coops and other attractants.

Council debated whether to impose a broader law, but decided to focus on garbage for the time being, as most bear incidents were prompted by unsecured garbage. Other aspects, like bird feeders and barbecue grills would be difficult to enforce, they determined.

Recent Headlines



SKIP

Ads by