

Amber Carrillo

From: Katrina Tough [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2025 11:37 AM
To: Public Comment; Public Comment
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Bears and Post-Fire Hardening / Historic Review

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

Hello City Council,

Bears - are we are all aware we have a serious bear threat right now. Escalating threat to life (esp. for elderly residents), ongoing property damage. We need a definitive plan for the removal of the current problem bear. Followed by action to prevent / hold people accountable who feed the bears.

Fire-Hardening /Historic Review - post fire we need to encourage everyone to fire hardening their homes. These measures (advised by FD, required by insurance to keep insurance) are not compatible with historic review. I request that the historic review be removed and the cost of permitting be minimal for all key fire hardening measures. This is critical and time sensitive - another fire is likely 5-10 yrs from now - we need to be ready.

Please consider the above.

Katrina Hitz-Tough
[REDACTED]

Amber Carrillo

From: Casey Handmer [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, June 22, 2025 12:26 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Problem bear in the canyon

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Completed

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

There is an unusually problematic bear currently menacing the canyon community. Apparently untagged, unafraid of humans or hazing, habituated to human food, and with dozens of encounters involving imminent risk to human life. This bear has broken into multiple homes and cars in just the last few weeks, including through locked windows and doors.

Most bears and humans can coexist without significant risk, damage, or drama. This particular bear is a walking liability that could kill someone any day and result in harm to more bears. The authorities have documented this pattern of increasingly risk to public safety.

Hazing and relocation are expensive, risky bandaids that will not help in this situation.

Please take decisive action to euthanize this bear before it kills someone or teaches other bears its ways. I mean, today.

Casey Handmer and 3 young children
[REDACTED]

Amber Carrillo

From: Sander Zandbergen [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2025 1:56 PM
To: Public Comment; PublicComment@cityofsierramadre.gov
Cc: laguilar@sierramadre.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment about bears/fires for 6/24 City Council meeting
Attachments: Bear_and_Wildfire_Citations.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

Hello City Council,

My name is Sander Zandbergen. My wife and I live in the upper canyon of Sierra Madre on Skyland Drive. I am writing about two urgent, life-safety issues: bears and wildfire.

First, the bear situation.

There is at least one bear currently breaking into homes in our neighborhood. This is frightening and dangerous—but the bear is not the root problem. We are.

Some residents are failing to secure their trash, and others are even feeding bears directly. According to the *California Department of Fish and Wildlife*, bears that find food near people become “food-conditioned,” lose their fear of humans, and begin to act aggressively. Once that behavior escalates, relocation often fails and the bear could be euthanized. Fortunately, our problem bear has not become aggressive towards humans, it is simply brazen in its search for easy food. We can still fix that.

The City must take this seriously. I urge you to:

- Enforce strict penalties for intentional feeding and impose fines for unsecured trash that leads to bear access.
- Provide public guidance on proper hazing—motion-triggered sprinklers, sirens, airhorns, and bright lights—to recondition bear behavior, as recommended by *BearWise.org* and used effectively in other mountain communities.
- Support residents who’ve had multiple break-ins with funding for deterrents like window bars, water alarms, or motion-activated sirens.

Other towns like South Lake Tahoe and Durango have shown that education and enforcement together can reduce these conflicts dramatically. We should follow their lead.

Second, wildfire preparedness.

I haven’t heard recent updates regarding the Fire Safe Council or progress on making it easier for residents to fire-harden their homes. The risks are only increasing.

Half our city is now in a *Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone*. And with climate change accelerating, we know we are likely to face more fast-moving, wind-driven fires like the Eaton Fire—possibly sooner than we expect.

According to *CAL FIRE*, fire-resistant building materials and vegetation management can make homes **40% to 80% more likely to survive wildfire exposure**. Most home losses—up to **90%**—are due to **wind-blown embers**, not direct flames. That means small upgrades can make a big difference.

Yet many of these upgrades are slowed or blocked by historic review processes. We are protecting visual details while putting entire neighborhoods at risk. We need the City to:

- Remove or significantly relax historic review requirements for essential fire-hardening upgrades.
- Minimize permitting costs and timelines for fire-related construction.
- And publish a clear roadmap for home hardening in Sierra Madre.

As *US Forest Service* research shows, wildfire resilience is community-wide. A single home that is not hardened can ignite nearby homes even if they are. We're all in this together.

I respectfully ask the Council to respond to this comment directly or in a public statement. I am simply looking for leadership from the Council on these pressing issues.

I've attached a PDF with some links to articles/data supporting my public comment.

Thank you,

Sander Zandbergen


Sierra Madre, CA 91024

Supplemental Handout: Bear and Wildfire Safety - Citations & Key Facts

BEAR MITIGATION

"Food-conditioned bears become aggressive and often require euthanasia. Relocation is rarely successful."

- California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Keep-Me-Wild/Bear>

"Consistent hazing-loud noises, lights, motion sprinklers-can teach bears to avoid homes."

- BearWise.org

<https://bearwise.org/bear-safety-tips/keep-bears-away/>

Durango, CO and South Lake Tahoe have both adopted \$250-500 fines and reduced bear encounters significantly.

- Durango Bear Smart: <https://bearsmartdurango.org>

- South Lake Tahoe Bear Box Program: <https://www.cityofslt.us/407/Bear-Box-Information>

WILDFIRE & HOME HARDENING

"Homes with fire-resistant upgrades survive at 40-80% higher rates."

- CAL FIRE

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/programs/communications/defensible-space-and-home-hardening/>

"60-90% of homes in wildfires are destroyed by wind-blown embers, not flames."

- NFPA / Firewise USA

<https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa>

"Historic review processes often delay or block upgrades needed to keep insurance and reduce fire risk."

- California Wildfire Commission 2020 Final Report

<https://opr.ca.gov/docs/20210112-WildfireCommissionFinalReport.pdf>

"One non-hardened home can cause nearby homes to burn even if they are upgraded."

- USFS Researcher Jack Cohen, "Home Ignition Zone"