

Resolution No. _____

A joint resolution of the City Council and the Board of County Commissioners providing for a bear smart policy and directing staff to implement best practices and policies to protect residents and bears in the interest of public safety and preservation of bears in the Missoula Valley as wildlife living in natural conditions.

WHEREAS, the City of Missoula includes in its mission a commitment to “maintaining and creating a harmonious natural and built environment”; and

WHEREAS, it is an established goal of Missoula County to “work to ensure public health and protect public safety through outreach, education, service, and prevention”; and

WHEREAS, Missoula area residents care about public safety and about the wildlife that adds richness to our outdoor environment and is a hallmark and legacy of our state of Montana; and

WHEREAS, the increase in human habitation outward into wildlands and the increase in the valley’s population has led to increased human-bear conflicts; and

WHEREAS, the City has taken preliminary steps to mitigate bear-human conflicts and reduce the chances of bears becoming habituated to human foods with its Wildlife Feeding Ordinance, ordinances concerning garbage management at the household level and the Bear Buffer Zone; and

WHEREAS, City and County elected officials and staff recognize that Missoula could further reduce conflicts and food habituation among bears by taking further measures in managing attractants for bears in the community; and

WHEREAS, data from the spring 2022 Bear Hazard Assessment for the Missoula Area showed that unsecured garbage is the primary cause of human-bear conflicts in the Missoula area (49 percent of conflicts), followed by birdfeeders, fruit trees in the fall, pet and livestock feed and unsecured human food such as food stored in unsecured freezers; and

WHEREAS, a reactive approach is costly in state and local staff and is ineffective in that it does not treat the problems and often leads to the death of bears; and

WHEREAS, the Bear Smart Community program offers proven policies and practices and opportunities for community-centric practices that reduce human-bear conflicts and opportunities for bears to become conditioned to human foods in communities; and

WHEREAS, several communities in British Columbia, Alberta and Montana, including Red Lodge, Big Sky, Whitefish, West Yellowstone, Virginia City and Polebridge, have adopted Bear Smart Community plans with success;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISSOULA AND THE MISSOULA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, MONTANA, that the City of Missoula and Missoula County commit to a Bear Smart Community policy that reduces human-bear conflicts using a combination of public education, promotion, ordinance, enforcement and public and private partnerships to remove bears' access to garbage, birdfeeders livestock and pet food, tree fruit and unsecured outdoor freezers.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE CTY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISSOULA, MONTANA, that the Bear Smart Community goal to address the root causes of human bear-conflicts to reduce the risks to human safety and private property as well as the number of bears that must be killed or relocated each year shall be accomplished with a combination of public education, ordinance and City-County and public-private partnerships.

AND BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISSOULA AND MISSOULA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, MONTANA, that the City Council and County Commissioners commit to including Bear Smart Community policy and practices in all future City and County plans.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City of Missoula this ____ day of _____, 2022.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by Missoula County this ____ day of _____, 2022.

ATTEST: CITY OF MISSOULA

APPROVED: CITY OF MISSOULA

Martha L. Rehbein, CMC, City Clerk

Jordan Hess, Mayor

ATTEST: MISSOULA COUNTY

APPROVED: BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Tyler Gernant, Clerk and Recorder

Juanita Vero, Chair

Dave Strohmaier, Commissioner

Josh Slotnick, Chair