

## Debra Thompson

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**From:** lynnescola@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 20, 2020 10:31 AM  
**To:** Assembly; chelanproduce@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Bears and garbage

I encourage the borough assembly to revise chapter 14.12 (Sanitation) of the municipal code or otherwise enact an ordinance to require that garbage be stored in a fully enclosed structure until early in the morning on garbage collection day.

Currently, section 14.12.080 requires only a "reasonable effort" to secure garbage. As defined, a reasonable effort allows bears easy access to garbage. The revised ordinance will end the easy access and the resulting public health and safety nuisance. This mitigates several problems: litter on both private and public lands from knocked-over cans, bears roaming populated areas looking for garbage as food and coming back for more when they find it (and becoming increasingly aggressive with increasing success), the risk of sickness and injury to bears from the contents of garbage cans, the risk of garbage-habituated bears injuring or killing people, the risk of bears being shot by residents, and the time and expense of law enforcement deterring, killing, or transporting bears.

Juneau, Sitka, Ketchikan, Skagway, Haines, and Hoonah all require in their municipal codes that garbage be stored in a fully enclosed structure (or similar language) and that garbage not be placed outside until early in the morning on collection day. None uses the "reasonable effort" standard. These communities' codes all specifically address bears and garbage. Petersburg's does not. The assembly can look to these other communities' codes for applicable language so would not need to reinvent the wheel.

The new law should come with escalating fines for scofflaws, so there may even be some revenue. Also, the borough could possibly see a reduction in its risk management costs. I'm going out on a limb here, but if I were a personal injury lawyer representing someone mauled or killed by a bear on a public street in Petersburg, I'd probably be rubbing my hands together in glee to discover that Petersburg lags so far behind the regional norm in preventing the hazard of garbage bears.

Jeff, earlier this month I heard you speak to the problem of garbage bears in an assembly meeting. I think you were addressing the city manager. You suggested that (I'm paraphrasing here) if killing or transporting problem bears was going to happen, the city manager should have the police do it well before Halloween, to prevent bears from mauling or killing children when they're out trick-or-treating. Those are terrible choices: bears killed or removed, or children injured or killed. We don't have to accept those terrible choices. We can fix the problem.

I lived in Juneau in the early 2000s when it first mandated that garbage be stored in a fully enclosed structure until collection day. That happened after a local professional photographer took photos of multiple bears eating from an open dumpster in the alley behind city hall during daylight hours, while several tourists stood nearby snapping their own photos. The Juneau Empire printed those professional photos. The message was, this was a mauling waiting to happen as well as an all-around repugnant and regrettable scene. The photos embarrassed the city into acting. Petersburg seems to be complacently waiting for a tragedy before acting and inexplicably content to live with the nuisance until then.

Better garbage handling won't completely stop bears from coming into town, but it will stop rewarding them for it and inviting them back for more.