

Edited AI-Generated Summary of Portion of the 28 October 2025 Tulare County Board of Supervisors Meeting

Agenda Item 25: Introduce an Ordinance Adding Article 14 to Chapter 3 of Part IV of the Ordinance Code

Summary provided by [Rev.com](#) and edited by Laile Di Silvestro

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The following AI-generated summary was provided by Rev.com and edited by Laile Di Slvestro. The numbers in parentheses and brackets indicate the when the topic was addressed in the meeting recording at <https://youtu.be/9dfg-HI4Bvk?t=4931>.

General Overview

On 28 October 2025 at 9:00 am, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors held a regular meeting that covered several topics. The main event was a lengthy and contentious public hearing and board debate regarding a proposed ordinance that would affect the community of Three Rivers, the primary gateway to Sequoia National Park. The Bear Smart Three Rivers team has provided an annotated transcript of the discussion that exposes the untruthful and misleading statements that informed the vote to introduce the ordinance. The purported intent of the proposed ordinance is to mitigate the human-bear conflict in Three Rivers that is driven by inadequate garbage management. The proposed ordinance would not provide any meaningful improvement, however. It would mandate any gray-waste carts a hauler chooses to label “bear resistant,” as well as the metal bins responsible for 47% of the garbage related incidents in 2025. It would not address the recycling and organic waste containers responsible for more than 25% of the 2025 garbage-related incidents. Despite the negligible public benefit that the ordinance would provide, Tulare County Solid Waste proposed to increase Three Rivers cart service fees almost 30% and bin service fees 10%. Several residents from the Three Rivers community spoke in opposition to the ordinance, citing issues with cost, effectiveness, and a lack of community collaboration. After hearing from the public and the waste hauler, the board debated the matter heatedly, with clear divisions among the supervisors, before ultimately passing the ordinance on a 3-2 vote.

Key Points

[01:43:02] Residents from the Three Rivers community argued that the proposed ordinance is inadequate because it does not include recycling or organic waste carts, it mandates use of the metal bins responsible for 47% of the garbage incidents, it mandates any gray-waste bin the hauler chooses to label "bear resistant," the proposed carts are not usable by many people in the community, and the cost would entail an unfair profit for the hauler and unreasonable burden on a community with a high percentage of senior and disabled residents. [01:38:41] They stated the county did not collaborate with the community as required by the 2018 Three Rivers Community Plan. Citing demonstrably false information, the waste hauler defended its chosen cart, its cost, and its effectiveness. The board members were sharply divided; a minority sided with residents, calling the ordinance inequitable and incomplete, while the majority argued that adopting the ordinance was better than doing nothing; that they accepted the assurance of the hauler that it would provide a certified bear resistant gray-waste cart, even though the ordinance wouldn't require it; and that was not the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors to dictate the waste hauler's profits. [02:04:31]

Editor's note: It is indeed the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors to dictate the hauler's profits. Per county code, haulers are allowed a "fair profit," which typically averages about 10% of the cost of doing business. (See section 4-03-1250 of Chapter 3 of Part IV of the Tulare County Ordinance Code below.)

4-03-1250 RATE APPROVAL:

The Board is authorized to approve, disapprove or modify the proposed schedule of maximum rates submitted by the Franchise Haulers. All rates shall be reasonably related to the costs of doing business, to a fair profit to the Franchise Hauler, and to providing sufficient and proper service to the public. In determining whether such rates are reasonable, the Board may consider the length of haul, types of Solid Waste collected, stored or transported, the number, types and locations of customers served, the investment in equipment and facilities, the local wage scales, the cost of disposal, and any other factor deemed by the Board to be relevant to the cost of doing business, to a fair profit to the Franchise hauler, and to providing a sufficient and proper service to the public.

Notable Quotes

The following quotes were selected by artificial intelligence.

Supervisor Eddie Valero (02:10:33): "Partial bear resistance is no bear resistance. Communities across the mountain west... have developed Bear Smart models that pair certified bear-resistant infrastructure with education, visitor accountability, and local stewardship. [02:09:22] These programs work because they are community built and scientifically grounded." (Context: Arguing against the proposed ordinance, stating it was a piecemeal approach that failed to address the whole problem, unlike successful models in other communities.) [02:09:15]

Supervisor Eddie Valero (02:12:15): "We owe it to Three Rivers and to every community that feels unheard to prove that government still listens and still learns and still works with its people." [02:04:31]

Laile Di Silvestro, Bear Smart Three Rivers (01:41:54): "The Bear Smart team has been sharing a simple formula with the solid waste department, which is 'full bear resistance + affordability + community collaboration = success'." (Context: A Three Rivers resident summarizing the community's proposed approach to solving the bear and trash problem, arguing the county's ordinance failed on all three points.) [01:42:06]

Laile Di Silvestro, Bear Smart Three Rivers (01:41:54): "If we implement this simple formula this winter, the cubs next spring will not be raised as garbage bears and our older bears can start relearning to be wild." [01:42:06]

Joseph Kalpakoff, Mid Valley Disposal (01:51:25): "These bear carts are five times the cost of a regular garbage can... [01:52:11] I have to go with this ordinance. Mid Valley, they have to buy a thousand carts at \$275,000 that are not contemplated in that current rate today." (Context: The owner of the waste hauling company explaining the significant capital investment required to implement the ordinance, justifying the additional monthly fee for customers.) [01:52:42]

Chairman Pete Vander Poel (02:12:45): "I take deep offense to saying that rural areas have been historically underrepresented and misrepresented... [02:12:45] I will not throw my county staff under the bus saying that they do a poor job and that they did not do any effort, put any effort forward to make sure that this issue was resolved adequately." (Context: Responding directly and angrily to Supervisor Valero's comments, defending his own record and the work of county staff.) [02:13:47]

Supervisor Larry Micari (02:14:45): "You have moved into a home of the bears. [02:15:41] They've been there for many, many, many, many years and you moved into their home. So we do have to have an interface with them and we have to do what we can to control."

Detailed Insights

1. Main Arguments:

Three Rivers Residents (various speakers): Their central argument was that the proposed ordinance should be rejected, and Tulare County Solid Waste should be instructed to start over —this time in collaboration with the community (01:31:53). [01:35:36] They contended the proposed ordinance is procedurally flawed due to a lack of any community collaboration, substantively flawed for not mandating any certified bear-resistant containers, and financially flawed for placing an unfair perpetual financial burden on customers (01:38:35). [02:08:11]

Waste Hauler (Joseph Kalpakoff): His argument was that the additional \$12 monthly fee was a necessary cost to cover the significant capital and operational expenses of providing a much more expensive, specialized product, and that the chosen cart was effective and certified (01:51:25).

Board Majority (Supervisors Vander Poel, Micari, Townsend): Their argument was that the ordinance, while perhaps imperfect, is better than doing nothing (02:14:45). [02:11:55] They argued that the

increased cost was an unfortunate but unavoidable reality of providing services in a rural, mountainous area. [02:16:28]

Board Minority (Supervisors Valero, Shuklian): Their argument was that the ordinance was inequitable and incomplete (02:04:28). [02:11:55] They sided with residents' concerns about the perpetual cost. Valero also agreed with the community's concerns that the proposed ordinance would not solve the problem because it would not mandate any certified bear-resistant containers. [02:08:18]

2. Supporting Evidence:

Elizabeth Holliday reported 347 confirmed bear sightings and incidents in 2025, with 233 involving garbage access and at least 75% involving short-term rentals (01:31:53). [01:36:23] Emily Hansen stated the \$12/month fee represented a 30% price increase for residents, that 33% of the population is over 65, and that the community generates nearly \$3 million in annual TOT revenue (01:38:35). [01:39:44] Joseph Kalpakoff, the hauler, provided the cost differential for the carts: a standard cart costs about \$60, while a bear-resistant cart costs about \$275 (01:51:25). [01:52:31]

Conclusion

This was a regular public meeting of the Tulare County Board of Supervisors, the elected governing body for the county. [20:17] The discussion about the bear-resistant waste containers took place in the context of long-standing and escalating conflicts between bears and humans in the community of Three Rivers. [01:35:36] Three Rivers is an unincorporated community that serves as the primary gateway to Sequoia National Park, making it a major tourist destination with a high concentration of short-term rentals, which residents identified as a key factor in the worsening trash problem.

The board's 3-2 decision to introduce the ordinance could have a direct financial impact on residents in the designated bear management zone, who would see their monthly waste hauling bills increase significantly if the ordinance is adopted. [01:23:21] Furthermore, bear-related garbage incidents and property damage are expected to increase if the ordinance is adopted, because it does not mandate any certified bear-resistant waste containers, it fails to address recycling and organic waste, and it mandates the metal bins that have been responsible for 49% of the 280 garbage incidents in 2025 (as of 10 November 2025).

The contentious nature of the hearing and the divided vote may have damaged the relationship between the county government and a vocal segment of the Three Rivers community, potentially making future collaboration more difficult. The public and personal conflict between supervisors could also strain working relationships on the board, potentially impacting future decision-making on other sensitive issues. [02:05:06]