



# The Bonita Highlander

June 2026

## Exterior Lighting

### Exterior Lighting Rule

Following the discussion regarding exterior lighting at our May HOA Board meeting and receiving a fair amount of feedback on the issue through both emails and verbally, the decision has been made to leave the current "holiday" lighting timeframe in place but clarify the intent with actual dates for more clarity.

To be clear, the intent of the original rule that is nearly 50 years old was that holiday lights could be installed and enjoyed for December holidays. They could go up 4 weeks in advance (Thanksgiving weekend) and were to be removed 2 weeks following the holiday (second week of January). The Bonita Highlands is a sleepy, rural community and we believe the proposed rule as written adheres to the intent and expected ambience of the community. By adding the second paragraph, we believe that security/safety lighting is addressed in a clear and consistent manner.

The clarified rule to be discussed and voted on is as follows:

Exterior holiday lighting displays are allowed November 25 – January 10. No other holiday lighting is permitted outside of this time frame.

Year-round, permanent exterior lighting, including exterior security lights and motion-sensor lights, must be shielded, low intensity and downward facing so as to create no light trespass to neighboring lots or into the night sky. Only white-toned bulbs are permitted with steady light flow -- no colored lights, twinkling or strobe effects. Any lighting that is higher than 9' must be turned off after 11 pm unless it is motion-sensored so as to eliminate continuous lighting that may intrude into neighboring lots. Security lights, porch lights, garage lights and driveway lights are permitted throughout the night provided they are not above 9' -- these lights should be shielded and downward facing so as to create no light trespass to neighboring lots or into the night sky.

Please note that these guidelines are consistent with San Diego County guidelines. We will discuss this at our June HOA Board Meeting on June 9, 2026 at the Bonita Firestation. The meeting starts at 6 pm. We invite homeowners to attend should you want to provide input.

If you are unable to attend but would like to comment on the proposed changes, please send an email to [bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com](mailto:bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com) and include your name and address.

Following the discussion, we will then vote on the rule at our August meeting, and it will go into effect at that time.

## BONITA HIGHLANDS HOA -Firewise USA® Recognition

We are proud to announce that Bonita Highlands has officially been recognized as a 2026 Firewise USA® Site by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

This recognition reflects the extensive wildfire mitigation and vegetation management work completed throughout our community "Open Space Areas" to date and acknowledges the progress Bonita Highlands has already made under the HOA's long-term wildfire mitigation strategy.

Bonita Highlands is currently implementing a comprehensive 3-year Firewise and open space mitigation plan consisting of three phases designed to systematically reduce wildfire fuel loads, improve defensible space, and enhance long-term community safety.

We are pleased to report that the HOA is currently ahead of schedule, having already completed Phase 1 of the plan. Work on Phase 2 is scheduled to begin this month and will continue the community-wide vegetation management and fuel reduction efforts already underway. Future work under Phase 3 will continue building upon these improvements in the years ahead. **What Has Been Accomplished So Far**

Over the past year, the HOA has completed significant Firewise and open space mitigation work, including:

- Large-scale open space mowing and brush removal
- Tree trimming, thinning, and ladder fuel reduction
- Removal of dead and overgrown vegetation
- Brow ditch and drainage maintenance
- Trail entrance and equestrian area maintenance
- Ongoing irrigation inspections and vegetation management
- Fire fuel reduction in multiple open space areas throughout the community

These efforts represent approximately \$180,000 in wildfire mitigation and open space maintenance work completed during the 2025–2026 fiscal year. **What Firewise Recognition Means**

Firewise recognition is awarded to communities that actively reduce wildfire risk through organized planning, vegetation management, fuel reduction, and ongoing maintenance efforts. This designation demonstrates that Bonita Highlands is taking proactive and measurable steps to improve wildfire safety and reduce community-wide fire risk.

This recognition was awarded based on the mitigation work completed to date and reflects the HOA's continued commitment to carrying the project forward through Phases 2 and 3 of the community's wildfire mitigation plan. **Why This Matters for Homeowners**

California insurance regulators are increasingly encouraging insurance companies to recognize documented wildfire mitigation efforts when evaluating wildfire risk, policy renewals, and underwriting decisions.

While Firewise recognition does not guarantee lower premiums or prevent policy changes, it provides important documentation showing that Bonita Highlands is an actively managed and fire-conscious community working to reduce wildfire exposure.

Homeowners may wish to retain copies of:

- The Bonita Highlands Firewise USA® certificate
- HOA wildfire mitigation summaries
- Any personal home-hardening or defensible space improvements completed on their property

These materials may be useful when discussing coverage renewals or mitigation efforts with insurance carriers or brokers. They will be available on the Bonita Highlands website for download.

Maintaining Firewise status is an ongoing effort that depends on continued community participation and homeowner cooperation. Residents are encouraged to continue maintaining defensible space around homes and follow wildfire preparedness best practices. Bonita Highlands has briefed SD County officials and the various Sweetwater Community groups regarding Proctor Valley issues and has requested their active participation in the program.

The HOA thanks all residents for their continued support as we advance through Open Space Phases 2 and 3 of the Bonita Highlands Firewise plan and work toward building a safer, more resilient community for years to come.

### Just a thought ...

It has been 10 years since I accepted the job of HOA recording secretary. Over that time I have worked with some remarkable people who either volunteered as Board of Directors or were paid part time staff members. To a person, they all had the best interests of the Highlands at heart.

What I have noticed and wanted to mention was a change in demeanor of the HOA response to various issues. First the Board as moved from "fine warning letters" which were costly and time consuming to "Friendly reminder" door hangers. In the past, the letters were often ignored and no action was taken which resulted in a fine that just irritated homeowners. Sometime it even led to small claims court action. I have the HOA files in my garage and part of my job is to purge those files of unnecessary communication to try and reduce their content to SCRs and meaningful information. I have shredded literally thousands of yellow fine warning letters. Thankfully we are now using door hangers which are very effective (in my opinion). How many times have you walked by your leaning mail box and mentally put it on your to do list only to have it pushed to the bottom as life got in the way? The door hanger is an "aha" moment not an insult. Please stop and take a breath and consider the intention of the door hanger. It certainly is not to offend, just remind. The Highlands is a great place to live and due to the perseverance of the Board of Directors and staff, it has remained a well maintained neighborhood. We all should feel very blessed...I know I do. Mary Ellen (original owner... purchased first home March 1974) Summer is here and

### Lets Let's Be Safe

School is out! A reminder to all drivers in the Highlands to be watchful for kiddos and young people who are out and about.

There have been many news stories and social media postings recently involving e-bikes/motorized bikes which are quickly becoming a huge safety concern especially when kids are involved. The Highlands is not exempt from this. Kids on e-bikes are speeding along sidewalks, in the middle of the road, riding abreast of each other and on our horse trails. Many are doing wheelies, swerving back and forth and riding no hands. Unfortunately, many of them seem to be oblivious to their surroundings and safety and are counting on someone else to be watchful of them.

Parents: REMIND your kids to be safe at all times. DO NOT operate these motorized bikes on sidewalks, stay on the side of the road/bike lanes and adhere to all traffic signs. DO NOT dart in front of moving vehicles. Multiple riders should ride single file not abreast. Wear helmets. Eliminate the unsafe behavior. These bikes are only allowed on the trails if they are pedal-assisted. Horseback riders always have the right of way on the trails. Be respectful of both the horses and riders and keep your distance to not startle the horses. Trail walkers have the right of way over the bikes. Bikers should move out of the way and defer to the hikers. Remember that the trails are NOT intended for any motorized vehicles and there may be rocks, holes or other small obstacles. Be cautious

.Drivers: Be watchful at all times for kids both on and off bikes. Watch your speed. We continue to have complaints from our community of neighbors bombing down the road. The speed limit is 25 mph in the Highlands – follow it! Lets all work together to have a safe summer.

**The Bonita Highlander** is the monthly newsletter of the Bonita Highlands Homeowners' Association (BHHA), a California non-profit corporation. The Newsletter is distributed (postage paid) or emailed to each residence within the Bonita Highlands. Information for publication should be send to the recording Secretary & Editor, Mary Ellen Phillips at [bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com](mailto:bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com) by the 15th of the month, for publication the following month. The Association reserves the right to edit any copy submitted for publication.

**BHHA  
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The BHHA documents, forms, meeting minutes and notices can be found on its website: [.org](http://bonitahighlands.org)



## ***The Bonita Highlander***

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The next monthly BHHA meeting will be held on Tuesday **May 12, 2026 at 6:00 PM**, in person at the Bonita Sunnyside Fire Station. All homeowners are welcome to attend.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Introduction of Board members, Pledge of Allegiance, Announcement of the Next Meeting, Adoption of Minutes from the last monthly meeting.
2. Homeowner appearances for appeals to notices, fines, or requests for structural alterations.
3. Homeowner Open Communications.
4. Committee and Staff Reports: ACC-A (SCRs), ACC-C (violations), Treasurer, Open Space Chairperson, and BHHA Communications.
5. Old Business: Exterior lighting
6. New Business: assessments & late fees, banking updates, finance and escrow services update. detailed inspections
7. Community Items of Interest.
8. Board Member Comments.
9. Adjournment.
10. Board Executive Session: (personal, financial, compliances issues, if required).

Note: Agenda will be posted to PayHOA the Friday before the monthly mtg.



The BHHA Board of Directors (BOD) welcomes and encourages e-mail and letters from homeowners. Any letter sent to the Board may be published in this newsletter. Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author or other contributor, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the BOD or any Staff Member.