



# *The Bonita Highlander*

**February 2026**

## **"It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood!!"**

As we start the new year, all of us who live in the Bonita Highlands should take a moment and appreciate how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful neighborhood! There are very few neighborhoods in the South Bay where the houses sit on "full size lots" with large yards, some of which are actually zoned to keeping horses. We are blessed with large lots, miles of hiking trails and over 100 acres of Open Space areas filled with trees that separate our houses and makes the neighborhood feel like we're in the country! A former BHHA BoD member used to call the Bonita Highlands "City Close, Country Living", and that's exactly what we are! For those that are able to get out and about the Highlands, they can see hawks, owls, eagles, falcons, egrets, raccoons, opossums, rabbits, squirrels, coyotes, and several horses along the trails.

Over the past few years, the Highlands has been undergoing a regeneration as many people who were raised here or near here are moving into the Highlands to raise their young families. Some people are renters, others buyers, but all seem to enjoy the Highlands and the "country living" it offers its residents. Children are able to walk to the Sunnyside Elementary School using the crosswalk at the foot of Belle Bonnie Brea and the stairway just north of Central Ave. The crosswalk used to have flashing lights, but drivers still need to be on the lookout for children, parents, and pets crossing the street and mindful it is a 25 mph school zone.

There are a variety of dogs who reside in the highlands and we frequently put reminders in the newsletter for pet walkers to pick up after their pets and take it home. Plus, pet walkers are reminded to keep your pets on their leash for the safety of other people on the trails, Open Space, and sidewalks.

Another great thing about the Highlands is that residents watch out for their neighbors and their pets. We've heard several stories how neighbors have safely returned "escaped" pets to their homeowners! Last year an "escapee" was a Large Tortoise (Godzilla) from a new homeowner! We quickly found out there was a "tortoise network" in the Highlands!!

The Bonita Highlands is part of the unincorporated part of San Diego County, and as such falls under the County's street and parking regulations, i.e., hour limits, blocking corners, excessive vehicles that interfere resident parking, sidewalks, and general public safety. The BHHA does not own the streets or sidewalks, but the County and CHP tells us that homeowners should be encouraged to call the CHP or Sheriff for all vehicle related issues, especially those that cause unsafe situations for people or other vehicles.

As a quick reminder, the BHHA CCRs and Rules and Regulations are available on the BHHA website and are used by the BHHA to keep the Bonita Highlands the well groomed and maintained neighborhood it is today. And the fruit of these efforts is the ever increasing value of our homes!!

If you have any questions for the BHHA, please reach out to the Recording Secretary, at [bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com](mailto:bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com), we're here to Help!

## Thinking About Removing Your Pool??

In San Diego County removing an old in-ground swimming pool, whether a full removal or partial demolition, and backfilling the void with dirt requires permits and inspections to ensure safety, proper drainage, and prevention of settling or subsidence.

- A building/demolition permit is required to demolish or fill the pool (listed as “Pool Demolition Permit” in County records).
- The pool excavation and backfill are generally treated under the County’s Grading Ordinance.
  - Fill dirt must be “clean”, no organic material, compacted to at least 90% relative compaction
  - If the total fill volume exceeds certain thresholds or creates slopes greater than certain heights, a separate grading permit may be required.
  - For deep pools (>5 ft fill depth), a soils/geotechnical report and compaction testing are normally required by the County, even if not always explicitly listed in every handout.

Apply for permits through San Diego County PDS at <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds> Building Division or call 858-565-5920.

Doing a pool removal without permits or proper compaction can lead to major ground settling issues later (sinkholes, cracked slabs and patios, etc.) and major complications when you sell your property.

**RECOMMEND** homeowner’s hire a licensed pool demolition contractor, who should handle permits, drainage holes, compaction testing, and reports as part of their service!

## BHHA Board of Director (BoD) Election

The BHHA BoD received five Candidate Qualification Forms (CQF) and have approved these five candidates for the Annual BoD Election. The BHHA Ballot 2026 and associated BHHA Election Notice have been distributed via mail or PayHOA to all BHHA homeowners. The five candidates include the individuals listed below.

- Mike Parnell — Standing President
- Liz Witter — Standing Vice President
- Steve Fox — Standing Secretary
- Dana Toogood — Standing Treasurer
- Dan Diaz — Standing Member-at-Large

Once homeowners receive their Ballots and Notice, they need to read and follow the instructions in the Notice to cast their five (5) votes and return their Ballot in the pre-addressed envelope to the BHHA or via email to the Recording Secretary at [bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com](mailto:bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com) on or before 2 MAR 2026.

## Property Modifications & Changes

Yes, it’s still winter, but now is the time to start thinking about your Summer Projects! If you are planning a major renovation or just some of the normal updates, i.e., painting, windows, garage doors, landscaping, fences, etc., now is the time to submit your Structural Change Request (SCR) to the BHHA for Board approval. You can find the SCR on the BHHA website or request it from the Recording Secretary at [bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com](mailto:bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com). And just a quick reminder, many home improvements require San Diego County permits and the County requires an HOA’s approved SCR before they issue the permit. So now’s the time to get ahead of the game on any major projects!

## Reminders From the Board

### **The U.S. Fish and Wild Life Reminds Homeowners Not to Feed Wild Animals!**

- Wild animals with regular access to human or domestic pet food slowly get used to being in busy areas and seeing humans. Over time these wild animals become more calm and docile, but they are still “wild” animals and can easily and quickly revert back to “wildly” aggressive behavior and cause harm to our pets and people in the area.
- Wild animals can carry diseases, including hantavirus and rabies. Avoid any risk of getting these diseases from wild animals by not feeding them or attempting to interact with them. If bitten by a wild animal, you should go to the emergency room immediately and get evaluated for rabies; and you may be required to undergo a series of rabies shots unless the wild animal can be caught and tested for rabies.

**Coyotes have been seen jumping over backyard fences on a daily basis, and some have attacked homeowner pets! Do Not Feed the Wild Animals - its Considered a Safety Issue for Homeowners!**

**Save the Bees, Help Plants Grow!** The BHHA Member at Large has someone who will come and retrieve bees that have made their home in or near your home! If you have a bee issue, please contact the BHHA Recording Secretary at [bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com](mailto:bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com) and we can put you in touch with these helpful Bee Keepers, who will relocate your bees into their hives!

**Need Your Assessment Statement for your Mortgage Broker?** There is now a “PayHOA Portal” button in the upper right hand corner of our BHHA website. That button will take you to the PayHOA Login page and your property on PayHOA where you can find all kinds of information about your property including the financial transactions involving your property.

**The BHHA Annual Mailing has Been Distributed to Homeowners!** After three formal reviews, the BHHA BoD approved the FY26/27 Annual Budget and Reserve Study at the January BoD Meeting. These documents as well as several other BHHA related documents have been mailed or sent electronically via PayHOA to all homeowners. Keep your eyes out for them!

**Electronic Transmit Consent (ETC):** For those homeowners that have completed and submitted an ETC form to the Recording Secretary, the BHHA can send you things like the BHHA Annual Mailing, the BHHA Annual Election information, and this BHHA Monthly Newsletter. You have just saved the BHHA hundreds of dollars in postage, just for the month of January 2026 alone! Thank You! Anyone who wishes to get their BHHA documents electronically, please contact the Recording Secretary for an ETC form.

**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 sent 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  
PO Box 458  
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The BHHA documents, forms, meeting minutes and notices can be found on its website:  
[bonitahighlands.org](http://bonitahighlands.org)



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The next monthly BHHA meeting will be held on Tuesday **February 10, 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), Financial Officer, Open Space Chairperson, and BHHA Communications.
5. Old Business: Budget adoption, New Assessment for 2026,
6. New Business: Landscape Contract, Tree Maintenance Bids, Exterior Lighting,
7. Community Items of Interest.
8. Board Member Comments.
9. Adjournment.
10. Board Executive Session (if required).



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.