

DARK SKIES: Students from SHS Astronomy Club presented to City Council

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glare. Warmer-colored lights have a lower impact on night vision.

The students illustrated how Sisters' night skies are currently very similar to what the Portland area had in the 1950s. They told Council, "We are at a critical time, with the increase of population growth in Central Oregon, to have a chance to influence our ability to see stars into the future. Costs and efforts we pay now will be far outweighed by benefits in the future."

The students are asking Council to update and fully implement the City's dark-sky ordinance, which was written in 2010 with five years given for implementation. Up to this year, little has been done and Council is intent on changing that. The students would like to see public education to raise awareness regarding appropriate lighting as well as enforcement of the code.

The southeastern part of Oregon is one of the largest pristine dark-sky areas in the United States. Sisters and all of Central Oregon influences that area with our lighting. The students urge the use of responsible lighting practices in Sisters to protect our dark skies and to buffer the area to the southeast.

Light pollution is caused by unshielded lights, blue/white lights, excessive lighting, and inappropriate lighting. All these factors give rise to light trespass, glare, and sky glow.

Responsible outdoor lighting should:

- Be *targeted and shielded* to prevent glare and light trespass on others' property.
- Be as *dim* as possible and as *warm* as possible.
- Provide a *safe and secure* environment.
- Be *controlled* with motion sensors, timers, or turned off when not needed.

• *Enhance visibility*, not impede it. With a new compliance officer joining the City staff in March, there will be personnel available to offer education and awareness regarding dark skies and, if needed, enforce compliance with the ordinance.



PHOTOS BY KRIS KRISTOVICH

Sisters' night skies offer spectacular experiences – if we keep them dark.

The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA – www.darksky.org) offers advice on lighting – and how to productively approach your neighbors about theirs...

"We suggest taking the following steps to educate your neighbor, and by extension your community, about the value of dark-sky-friendly lighting," IDA states.

- **Make friends, not enemies.** Your neighbors probably don't even realize their lighting is bothersome.

- **Stay positive and don't argue.** Be tactful and understanding about your neighbor's right to light their property.

- **Suggest alternatives to their current fixture.** Ask them to move the light, shield it, or add a motion sensor so it's activated only when needed. Offer to help get this done.

- **Be informative.** Talking to your neighbor is a great opportunity to be an advocate for good lighting. There are many reasons to use dark-sky-friendly lighting. Read up on the

issues regarding light pollution. A number of educational resources are available through IDA.

- It's useful to know the local costs of electricity (cents per kWh) and the local lighting control ordinances. This information is available on most city websites, from your regional utility company, and on your utility bill. Visit IDA online for a useful guide to help you find out if there is a lighting ordinance in your town.

- You may also want to compile a list of local businesses or homes in the neighborhood with good quality lighting as an example of effective security measures that are dark-sky friendly.

- Having a list of shielded light fixtures to provide as alternatives to your neighbor's current lighting is also recommended. Use IDA's

Fixture Seal of Approval database to find dark-sky-friendly fixtures and devices.

- Don't dismiss their need to feel safe. Remember that home is a place where everyone wants to feel relaxed and safe.

- Explain that light trespass is a form of light pollution, but don't threaten legal action. The idea of a lawsuit can create bad feelings among the whole neighborhood.

- Remember that everyone wants the same thing: a chance to relax in his or her own environment. Work together to create an atmosphere that benefits the community.

It's not difficult or expensive to each do our bit to make Sisters more dark-sky-friendly. It just requires a little awareness and effort to help each other (not) see the light.

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