

(DRAFT - UPDATED 1/27/25)

NOTICE

RESOLUTION #XXX-2025 OF THE TOWN OF FENWICK ISLAND, DE

WHEREAS, the aesthetic beauty and wonder of a natural night sky is a shared heritage of all humankind; and

WHEREAS, the experience of standing under a starry night sky inspires feelings of wonder and awe, encouraging a growing interest in science and nature, particularly among young people and visitors from outside the local communities; and

WHEREAS, light pollution has scientifically established negative economic and environmental consequences, which result in significant impacts on the ecology and human health of all communities; and

WHEREAS, 80 percent of the world's population, including many people in the state of Delaware and along the East Coast, live under a dome of light pollution—excessive artificial lighting at night that disrupts natural darkness (i.e., 'skyglow')—and may never experience the visual wonder or ecological and health benefits of living under a dark sky; and

WHEREAS, light pollution represents a waste of natural resources amounting to roughly \$3 billion per year of wasted energy in the United States and contributes to diminished energy security; and

WHEREAS, migratory birds can be confused by artificial lighting and can be drawn away from their natural migration routes, often with disastrous consequences; and

WHEREAS, nocturnal insects and pollinators (which are active only at night) are inhibited from performing functions which not only threaten their livelihood but which have downstream effects on food supplies that depend on pollination; and

WHEREAS, nocturnal animals are disoriented by excess nighttime lighting and are unable to forage for food or reproduce, thus threatening their viability; and

WHEREAS, light pollution (glare, light trespass, skyglow) at night can cause sleep disruption and impact the circadian rhythm of humans, with documented negative health outcomes such as depression, obesity, cancer, diabetes and autoimmune conditions; and

WHEREAS, DarkSky International, the globally recognized authority on light pollution, recognizes International Dark-Sky Week to raise awareness of the effects of light pollution, provides free education, resources, and solutions to the public, and encourages the protection of and enjoyment of dark skies and responsible outdoor lighting; and

WHEREAS, DarkSky International has created widely accepted guidance for Responsible Outdoor Lighting at Night (ROLAN), including: 1) using light *only if needed*; 2) directing light *only where needed* (shielding); 3) using *low level light* (no brighter than needed); 4) *controlling light* with timers or motion detectors; 5) selecting *warmer colored light bulbs* (low Kelvin); and

WHEREAS, the Fenwick Island Town Council (hereinafter Council) and residents have long advocated for environmental stewardship as a core value in efforts to maintain an unspoiled beach, ocean, and delicate ecosystem within the Town boundaries and surrounding areas. This value is reflected by an official Environmental Committee, Ad Hoc Dark Skies Committee, Town Code, Comprehensive Plan, and Community Sustainability Plan; and

WHEREAS, Council has formally advocated for the value of limiting light pollution by protecting dark skies through the formation of a Dark Sky Working Group of the Residential Concerns Committee; and

WHEREAS, Council has additionally endorsed the value of protecting dark skies through the formation in 2024 of an Ad Hoc Dark Sky Committee to educate the public and consider updating the existing lighting ordinance, thus limiting commercial and residential light pollution as part of the restated Fenwick Island Comprehensive Plan approved in 2024; and

WHEREAS, it is well known that the effects of light pollution from surrounding areas will compete with the benefits endorsed by Council through the efforts of the Dark Sky Committee; and

WHEREAS, even though the Town of Fenwick Island and its Council Members and Committee Members have no jurisdiction or control over the decision-making process of surrounding communities or private real estate developers to adopt formal regulations limiting light pollution to protect dark skies; and

WHEREAS, a member of the Fenwick Island Town Council, at the Residential Concerns Committee meeting of on December 11, 2024, individually expressed interest in having members of the Ad Hoc Dark Sky Committee discuss the benefits of limiting light pollution with private real estate developers and community leadership from surrounding communities in Sussex County and Worcester County; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that it is important to support any opportunity whereby any member of the Ad Hoc Dark Sky Committee communicates with either private real estate developers or bone fide leadership of surrounding municipalities in Sussex/Worcesster County concerning ongoing efforts underway in Fenwick Island to protect dark skies. Such communications can include sharing knowledge about the deleterious effects of light pollution on the delicate ecosystems and human health, as well as proven procedures that can be implemented to limit light pollution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution shall be sent to the Governor of Delaware, and to our Federal and State Representatives as well as all members of the Sussex County Council as well as mayors of surrounding towns in Delaware and Maryland.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this resolution was passed unanimously by the Town Council of Fenwick Island on the xx day of month xxx, 2025.