

# BECKET DARK SKY ORDINANCE FAQ



## WHY DO WE NEED A DARK SKY ORDINANCE?

Light pollution, defined as an adverse and/or obtrusive effect of nighttime outdoor lighting (particularly in the blue spectrum), negatively affects not only the rural character of our community, but also the health and safety of people, wildlife, birds, insects, plants, and ecosystems. Light pollution is increasing by 10% per year, but by making educated choices we can have enough light at night for both safety and enjoyment while avoiding unintended consequences.

This Ordinance is necessary to keep up with current science and minimize the human health and environmental impacts of lighting, particularly for new lighting technology such as LEDs.

## WHAT WILL THE ORDINANCE DO?

The proposed Ordinance provides a set of standards for outdoor lighting that will:

- Minimize outdoor nighttime light pollution to the greatest extent possible, especially blue light.
- Protect residents from light trespass, or unwanted blue light, that negatively affects the enjoyment of property, disrupts the natural circadian rhythm of humans, wildlife, and agriculture, as well as being a form of energy waste.
- Provide adequate light and control glare to ensure the safe navigation of roadways, the safe performance of outdoor tasks at night, and to keep property free from harm.
- Minimize skyglow, to preserve the night sky as a natural resource, allowing all to see the stars and planets against the dark sky.
- Preserve the historic and rural character of Becket.
- Promote efficient and cost-effective lighting on public and private property, thereby reducing carbon emissions and costs.

## WHAT IS BLUE LIGHT?

Lights vary in color, ranging from soft yellow to blue. The term Correlated Color Temperature (CCT) is essentially a gauge of how yellow or blue the color of light emitted from a bulb appears. See other side of this page for details.

## CORRELATED COLOR TEMPERATURE VALUES



Correlated Color Temperature values are measured in Kelvin (K); this rating can be found on the packaging or on the light bulb itself. Since blue color light is most harmful to humans, wildlife, and our ecosystem, this Ordinance would require outdoor lighting to be at or under 3000 K which is also warmer in feeling.

### DON'T BRIGHT LIGHTS MAKE US SAFER?

Bright light causes glare; glare makes it hard to see what is behind that light. Thus, more light does not make us safer! Motion sensors can instead be used to send a signal that something is amiss. Wildlife, such as bears, can acclimate to lights that are constantly on, but are startled when motion sensor lights are triggered.

### WHAT LIGHTS IN TOWN WILL THE ORDINANCE APPLY TO?

The proposed Ordinance would apply to all privately owned outdoor lighting as well as lighting owned, maintained, or controlled by the Town (unless specifically exempted), including streetlights, signs, flags, and holiday lighting.

### WHEN WOULD THIS ORDINANCE TAKE EFFECT?

The Ordinance allows three (3) years for existing non-conforming lights to come into compliance unless they are a nuisance or safety hazard. Any new lighting installed after the Ordinance is passed must comply with the provisions of this Ordinance. There are other circumstances where compliance would be required sooner:

- when lighting has reached the end of its useful life.
- when a structure is repaired or replaced.
- when a property changes hands.

Any property owner for whom it is a hardship to comply may apply for a waiver.

### IS THIS ORDINANCE GOING TO COST ME OR THE TOWN MONEY?

Not necessarily! Existing non-conforming lights can be shielded or redirected, have bulbs replaced, or be turned off at certain hours to comply. If this can't be done, dark sky compliant lighting fixtures or bulbs could be purchased (see *"What Resources Can Help Me"* below).

### HOW WILL THE ORDINANCE BE ENFORCED?

The Ordinance calls for the designation of a Lighting Enforcement Officer. The Lighting Enforcement Officer shall give property owners the opportunity to comply before instituting a fine, not to exceed \$25/day for residents and \$75/day for businesses.

### WHAT RESOURCES CAN HELP ME IDENTIFY DARK-SKY FRIENDLY LIGHTING?

Dark Sky International (the IDA, [DarkSky.org](https://www.darksky.org)) has many resources, including commercial, industrial, and residential outdoor lighting that reduces light pollution.

### HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

There will be informational sessions, telescope nights, and more to keep residents apprised of the benefits of dark skies and the status of the Ordinance over the coming months. In addition, Dark Sky Ambassadors are needed to help spread the word and advocate for the Ordinance. The goal is to have this Ordinance on the spring 2024 Town Meeting agenda. You can stay informed or volunteer by visiting our website [BecketDarkSkies.org](https://BecketDarkSkies.org), or keep an eye on the Becket Beat and Becket Community Forum Facebook pages.