

## Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors  
representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar  
PO Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0248 | midcoastcommunitycouncil.org*

**Gus Mattammal** | **Gregg Dieguez** | **Scott Bollinger** | **Kimberly Williams** | **Dan Haggerty**  
Chair Vice-Chair Treasurer Secretary  
**Ann Rothman**  
**Claire Toutant**

Date: **October 9, 2024**

To: Supervisor Ray Mueller  
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

Re: **A Lighting Ordinance for the San Mateo County Midcoast**

Dear Supervisor Mueller,

As an advisory body to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, the Midcoast Community Council represents the unincorporated communities of Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar. In recent years the Midcoast community has been impacted by a growing number of lighting issues that significantly impact quality of life, including excessively bright LED lighting that is blue-rich, nighttime glare, sleep disruption, obscured views of the night sky, and disruption and impacts to wildlife. The MCC has received many comments and complaints from those impacted by excessive nighttime lighting. In an effort to better understand the issue, we had a leading scientist in the field, [Dr. Travis Longcore](#) of UCLA, give a [presentation to the community](#) and answer questions in 2023. We have also reviewed information and recommendations from [DarkSky International](#) and ordinances adopted by other California municipalities. Based on this information and community feedback, we would like to recommend the development of a lighting ordinance for the Midcoast unincorporated areas that follows DarkSky International's guidelines, to address this ongoing problem.

A lighting ordinance would provide substantial benefits to midcoast communities and to the County by encouraging neighborhood friendly lighting, cost savings from energy efficient DarkSky compliant lighting fixtures and lighting, and better lighting plans that use lighting resources responsibly. It would also encourage consistency and cost-savings across multi-jurisdictional projects, ensuring lighting is appropriate, reduces glare, and considers all aspects of need and impact.

Responsible lighting would benefit wildlife on the coastside where sea birds such as pelicans, western snowy plovers, and other shorebirds as well as other migrating birds, are especially impacted by overly bright lighting and sky glow from light pollution. There are well-established findings about human health impacts from bright lighting at night as well, including sleep disruption, poor sleep quality, impaired daytime functioning, obesity, weakened immune system, among others. Bright lighting at night decreases vision by reducing contrast, limiting our ability to see, and older adults are especially affected by the glare. Lastly, responsible lighting would help

preserve the rural character of the coastside and allow everyone to enjoy the night sky on clear nights and would reduce the magnified glow of light pollution on foggy nights.

In recent years there has been a proliferation of excessively bright LED blue-rich spectrum lighting, and there is a misconception that this lighting is better. Science has shown that more lighting isn't better lighting, and that bright blue-rich night lighting has significant and well-documented health and environmental impacts and consequences, and wastes resources. Warmer LED lighting that is more targeted, better addresses outdoor lighting needs and reduces glare. Lighting fixtures and lights that comply with DarkSky guidelines are energy efficient and now widely available. A lighting ordinance would also be a natural fit with the County's energy efficiency measures.

The MCC further asks the County to establish a Lighting Ordinance Working Group to provide direct input and help advance the lighting ordinance. We recommend this group include at least seven stakeholders, including a representative from two relevant County departments, at least three non-profit stakeholders, and one from the MCC.

We ask San Mateo County to work towards adopting an outdoor lighting ordinance for the Midcoast based on ordinances adopted by the California cities of [Brisbane](#) and [Malibu](#). We believe any lighting ordinance should include a timeline for compliance based on criteria similar to the one outlined in the [City of Brisbane lighting ordinance](#) which establishes a reasonable graduated timeline for compliance by commercial properties, residential properties, and for street lights and County facilities. We recommend an implementation plan for the ordinance that includes incentives, educational initiatives and community outreach. The County's [Food Service Ware Ordinance](#) process is an example of how this might work.

We recognize this is the beginning of a cooperative and collaborative process and anticipate future needs to add to, subtract from, or otherwise enhance what other cities have adopted, to best address our own situation on the Midcoast.

We present this request in the spirit of furthering the goals of establishing regulations and a process for review of outdoor lighting that 1) Protects and promotes public health, welfare, and quality of life for residents, visitors, and wildlife; and, 2) Protects the view of the night sky for everyone to enjoy. We look forward to working with the County to adopt a successful lighting ordinance.

Sincerely,

MIDCOAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL  
s/Gus Mattammal, Chair

cc: Marisol Durani, Policy Director for Supervisor Ray Mueller  
Steve Monowitz, San Mateo County Planning Department  
Carolyn Bloede, Director, San Mateo County Sustainability Department  
Marshall Dinowitz, Sequoia Audubon Society