



THE SPOKES SPEAK - GEARED TO SERVICE

Rotary Club of the North Fork Valley

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Meeting Thursdays at Noon in the Paonia Town Hall

District 5470

Club 1180 - Chartered 12/20/22

Vol 58 Issue 39 – November 14, 2019

Guest Editor: Bain Weinberger

LAST MEETING: November 7, 2019

President Coombe presided.

Visiting Rotarians: Laura Derby

Key Guest: none

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- No Meeting on 11/28, 12/26 or 1/2

Program: Dark Skies Paonia – Aaron Watson

Barb introduced Aaron Watson, who is talking about the Dark Skies Paonia project. The group consists of community members who have come together to protect and improve the wonderful night sky we have here in Paonia and on the Western Slope. The mission of the group is to educate people about light pollution and to work with the town to protect, preserve and improve the quality of the night sky.

[Aaron displayed a photograph of the United States taken at night]. East of the Mississippi, it is really lit up. There are still some dark spaces west of the Mississippi. Paonia is “pretty dark”. About 80% of the population of the US cannot see the band of stars known as the Milky Way. We are lucky that we can see it. It can even be seen in downtown Paonia, which is really special. It is a visual resource, like the mountains.

What is Dark Skies?

The International Dark-Sky Association (IDS) is the main group, out of Flagstaff, Arizona. They offer certification for towns, National Parks or other areas interested in preserving their night sky. Dark Skies Paonia is a 501(c)(3) non-profit started last spring. Some members are interested in astronomy, others just want light pollution from street lights and neighbors’ lights minimized. They are working with the town to institute regulations on outdoor lighting and with DMEA (who owns the street lights) to upgrade the lights to a lower color temperature and better shielding.

Why is it important?

IDS Certification provides international recognition, and would put Paonia on their list of “dark sky” places. People throughout the world use this list to find dark places to go. This could potentially draw tourists interested in astronomy and other dark sky activities to the area. Westcliffe, Silver Cliff and Norwood have already been certified, and Ridgeway is on their way to certification. Westcliffe has even set up a small observatory with a telescope and has already seen a big increase in tourism since their

Dark Sky certification was published. It is estimated tourism spending has increased by \$1 million since certification.

Health is another reason to address nighttime lighting. Research is showing that modern LED lighting at a color temperature of 3000 Kelvin or below is easier on the eyes and does not create as many health impacts (such as cancer, obesity and insomnia) as blue-white light at 4000 K. The American Medical Association has released a report detailing the harmful effects of artificial nighttime light on both humans and animals.

Nighttime safety is a driving factor for artificial nighttime light, with many people believing that nighttime lighting reduces crime at night. However, research is showing that this is not necessarily true. More light does not make you safer. Some light is necessary, but it should be utilized and positioned carefully.

Steps to get certified.

The first step is for the Town to pass legislation to regulate outdoor lighting. Model ordinance language is available from IDS. To this end, Dark Skies Paonia has been meeting with the Town Council to see if such an ordinance could be passed. A requirement for certification is that the color temperature of the street lights must be 3000K or less, so the ordinance must stipulate this. Lights will also need to be shielded so that the light is directed to the ground, not out sideways or up toward the sky. This must also be included in the ordinance. Both the Town and DMEA appear to be receptive to working toward certification. It is estimated the town will save about \$17,000/year by switching to LED streetlights. Also, a public lighting inventory needs to be taken, detailing each public light as to type, location, shielding, etc. This allows progress to be tracked as lights are replaced.

Better pedestrian lighting is another goal. Street lights do not necessarily provide adequate lighting for pedestrians.

How to help and upcoming events.

You can help by supporting Dark Skies, and by changing whatever lighting you have to be more compatible with the Dark Skies goals. Neighbors could also be approached to encourage them to control their lighting where necessary.

April 24th, a star viewing party (in association with the Black Canyon Astronomical Society) is planned. The event will likely be held in Volunteer Park, and telescopes will be provided.

Q & A:

Q: Will the Town Council be discussing the Dark Sky ordinance at their meeting this coming Tuesday?

A: No, the first step is to get the Council to sign a Letter of Support for Dark Skies. That gives the green light for beginning work on the ordinance itself.

Q: Will any eventual ordinance apply to private and business lighting, or just public?

A: The ordinance will apply to all outdoor lighting in the town.

Q: Will existing lighting be grandfathered in?

A: Yes, generally the ordinance would allow 5-10 years for lights to be changed as part of routine replacement. This is up to the Town to decide. All that is necessary for certification is that the ordinance be in place. It is not required that all the lights be compliant initially.

Q: Black Canyon of the Gunnison is a Dark Skies park, right?

A: Yes. As well as the Grand Canyon, and several National Parks in Utah. A huge area of Utah is certified for Dark Skies.

Q: Will the new street lighting be shielded.

A: Yes, but there are questions on when and how. A set of test lights will be installed on 2nd street with different color temperatures and shielding so people can see how the lights work and can decide which would work best for emergency services and the population in general.

Q: Yard lights in rural areas are often a problem, both from a light pollution point of view and security.
 A: Research has shown that rural lighting often brings more crime, as the criminals are drawn in and can see what they are doing. Having less light can be safer (especially if you have a dog).



UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Date	Speaker	Program	Member	A/V Needed
11/14/2019	Forrest Carver	President Eisenhower	Ulli Lange	
11/21/2019	Debra Bianchi	Alzheimer's Association	Bob Lario	
11/28/2019		no meeting (Thanksgiving)		
12/5/2019			Ed Bliss	
12/12/2019			Jackie Parks	
12/19/2019			Kevin Parks	
12/26/2019		no meeting (Boxing Day)		
1/2/2020		no meeting		
1/9/20			Karri Polson	
1/16/20	Emily Wassell	Paonia Experiential Leadership Academy	Greg Thompson	



