

“Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star!”

ONE OF THE PRICELESS treasures of living here in Tom Nevers is our unobstructed view of the magnificent night sky. We're blessed with owning property in one of the very last places on the East Coast where we can still see the dazzling brilliance of the Milky Way and the Andromeda Galaxy.

But just as a neighbor's new house can block our “million dollar view” of the ocean, or the Sankaty light, or the lush contours of our scrub oak covered terrain, the glare of a neighbor's lights can dim and then cancel out our ability to see our “billion dollar view” of the starry heavens. That's a pity. And it's the reason that all of us should get behind the Dark Sky Initiative that's now the law of the land in Nantucket. And doing so is really pretty easy, once you know how.

Basically, the new Bylaw says that all outdoor lights with more than 40 incandescent watts per fixture must be shielded so that no light escapes upward above the horizon. If you have outside sconces, lanterns, deck lights, etc., just replace their brighter bulbs with 40 watt bulbs and your existing light fixtures will be in full compliance. (In replacing our 60 watt deck fixture bulbs with 40 watt ones, we found that the softer light was actually more pleasing, and certainly bright enough to see by.)

However, if you decide you need a brighter than 40 watt bulb in one or more locations, you may have to replace those fixtures. Under the new Bylaw, all exterior lighting fixtures (except for floodlights, which have their own special rules) must have an opaque top and translucent sides so that the bulb is not directly visible from neighboring properties or public rights-of-way. The only exception is if your lighting fixture

is wall-mounted under an architectural element that blocks any upward-directed light. For example, an overhanging entry porch roof.

All upward-directed lighting of building facades, trees and bushes is no longer permitted. Driveway and landscape lighting is still OK if it is limited to 35 incandescent watts per fixture per 150 square feet of driveway or landscape area. But here too, the fixtures must have opaque tops to pre-

vent the escape of uplighting. Flagpoles displaying local, state or national flags can still be lit, provided that no more than two light fixtures per flagpole are used—with the combined total brightness of the two light fixtures not to exceed 150 incandescent watts. But even then, these fixtures must be shielded so that their

**Now that
The Nantucket
“Dark Sky
Initiative”
is law,
what will we have
to do to comply ?**

lamps are not visible outside a 15-foot radius. However, the Bylaws clearly state that it is preferred that all flags be lowered at sunset so that no flagpole lighting of any kind is required.

So far we haven't talked about floodlights—which, of course, are the major light pollution problem. Under the new Bylaws, all ground-mounted floodlighting of a structure is prohibited. Floodlighting is only permitted if it's down-directed and also fully-shielded so that the lamps are not visible from adjacent or neighboring properties. If your floodlights can be directed downward, they can be brought quickly into compliance by adding a clip-on visor. One type, the Parshield, is available in bronze or white at \$10 per pair (plus shipping) via the internet at <http://www.parshield.com/index.html>.

One of the biggest complaints about outside lights is that they're often left on, blazing all night...or all month if a renter doesn't realize what that extra wall switch controls. That's why it's smart to use motion sensors or timers to control the duration of your nighttime safety and security lighting. Under the new Bylaw, motion sensors are the preferred method, with the dura-

tion of illumination set to be no longer than 5 minutes after the last detection of motion, and then only when triggered within the owner's property line.

What about traditional Holiday/Winter outside lighting? The Bylaw sets a total light intensity limit of one-half foot-candle at the property line and recommends that it be lit for no more than six weeks prior and two weeks following the holiday.

There are lots of other provisions in the new Bylaw covering commercial properties, pedestrian areas, event lighting, parking areas, historic properties and historic areas, roadways, and FAA and other Federal lighting requirements that involve public safety. If you're interested in reviewing them, check with the Town Clerk's Office.

What about enforcement? The new regs are already in place, and all existing exterior lighting devices that do not meet the new standards are considered to be “legal non-conforming fixtures”. As such, there will be no penalty or fines for them until April 2008—by which time all outdoor lighting fixtures that do not conform to the new code must be replaced with conforming fixtures or retrofitted to comply. But in the meantime, you are not allowed to add any more non-conforming fixtures beyond those you already have.

Soon, the Town Administrator will appoint a Lighting Enforcement Officer to oversee the enforcement of all outdoor lighting regulations. Bylaw violators will be notified in writing and given 30 days to comply before legal or other actions are taken. Non-compliance with a lighting regulation order can result in a \$100 penalty, with each day of non-compliance considered a separate violation.

But why wait for all that, when it's so easy to comply and begin enjoying all the Dark Sky benefits? Just pop in those 40 watt bulbs, direct your floodlights downward, and clip on a few low cost floodlight visors. That will reduce your nighttime light pollution in Tom Nevers by up to 90 percent.

Greater enjoyment of the dazzling sky above your home will be your magnificent reward. ❖