

SISTER ASTRONOMY CLUB ZOOM MEETING

March 16, 2021, 7 pm Thru SPRD

Participants: Mel Bartels, Jim Hammond, Thomas Jeffrey, Steve Moore, Paola Mendoza, Ron Thorkildson

Jim Hammond was moderator for the meeting.

The meeting began by participants introducing themselves.

Paola Mendoza, a member of the Sisters high school astronomy club, gave an impressive presentation about the importance of preserving the dark skies in Central Oregon. Entitled Sisters, A Dark Sky Community, it is the same talk she and Rima Givot delivered to Sisters city leaders Corey Misley, Scott Woodford, and Nicole Mardell via a virtual Zoom meeting on February 25.

The overriding theme of the presentation is that worsening light pollution is threatening to dimmish our dark skies here in Central Oregon, and what can be done about it. Besides robbing us of our ability to see the stars at night that sparks a sense of beauty and wonder, light pollution has a negative impact on ecology and human health. But it is the easiest form of pollution to fix. The following measures will help to reduce light pollution:

- Use only the minimum amount of light necessary for illumination.
- Use only warm colored lights (<3000K).
- Eliminate glare by fully shielding all lamps and directing the light downward.

Bill Kowalik of the Oregon Chapter of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) has established a network of Sky Quality Meters at 12 locations in Central Oregon to measure the darkness of the sky. The data collected will be used to determine how quickly our dark skies are deteriorating.

In 2015 educator Rima Givot conducted a comprehensive survey of the Sisters community to find out, among other things, how valued dark skies are here, and how aware the general populous is of the City of Sisters Dark Skies Standards and/or Deschutes County Outdoor and Greenhouse Lighting

Control ordinance. Ninety-eight percent of respondents said they value the dark skies here in Sisters, while 36% had little or no awareness about the city and county outdoor lighting standards/ordinances and how they are enforced.

The presentation was generally well received by Corey, Scott, and Nicole. Corey remarked that as a component of the Sisters Comprehensive Plan, a document that will guide how the city grows over the next 20 years, the issue of outdoor lighting will be reassessed during the next fiscal year (beginning in July of this calendar year).

After Paola's presentation, Jim, Paola, Steve, and Ron exchanged ideas about what SAC and the high school astronomy club could do to help increase dark skies awareness in Sisters. The following thoughts emerged from that discussion: develop a brochure or flyer outlining what constitutes IDA approved lighting fixtures that can be shared with local real estate groups and city planners; create posters highlighting steps that result in a dark sky community to display at stores and other establishments where people often gather; write articles and letters to the editor for The Nugget in support of creating a greater dark sky awareness in our community.

The following is a link to Paola's presentation: [presentation](#).

Although they were not in attendance at our SAC meeting, Bill Kowalik and Paul Bennett offered their suggestions for promoting dark sky awareness via email. Bill: The two astronomy clubs in Sisters are a good nucleus to lead forward; compose a Sisters-focused brochure on dark skies and getting real estate groups onboard to help distribute it and posting into on the community website; conduct a reconnaissance lighting inventory at night to help identify the 10 biggest light polluters in town; identify funding with the plan to hire electricians in town to work with residents and businesses to replace offending lights. Paul: Write articles/letters to The Nugget editor that express concern about growing light pollution, such as the negative impacts on wildlife and their migration, or citing research that shows the safety/danger of improper lighting. To help educate the public about light pollution, maybe Ken Burns would be interested in doing a TV special on the history of electric lights. Do

hardware stores like Lowes promote dark sky-friendly outdoor lights—should they?

Thomas Jeffrey viewed the March 13 presentation entitled From Desert to Coast, the Case for Dark Skies, sponsored by the Cape Perpetua Marine Reserve Collaborative. He said Mary Coolidge, Audubon's Bird Safe Campaign Coordinator, did an excellent job of emphasizing the harmful effects of light pollution on both animal and human life. Here is a link to that program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBAimnw918c>

Steve Moore told us about a good place he found from which to observe the night sky. It is quite dark and open there with no nearby lights, save for the light dome of Bend to the west. To get there proceed east on Alfalfa Market Road from Bend to Alfalfa. Approximately half a mile beyond the Alfalfa general store, turn right (south) onto County Line Road (gravel); it ends at a small trailhead to the Badlands. There are a limited number of parking spaces available.

Have a topic you would like to see covered at future meetings? If so, please email Ron Thorkildson (rthorkildson@bendbroadband.com) or Jim Hammond (drjhammond@oldshoepress.com).

The next on-line meeting will be on Tuesday April 20, 2021, beginning at 7 pm.

Ron Thorkildson
Jim Hammond
April 8, 2021