

Dark Sky Committee Unapproved Minutes
February 21st, 2023

Meeting opened at 6:09pm

In attendance: Katherine Charrette, Adam Charrette, Susan White,
From the public: Joe Dechene, Dave Roy

Excused: Steven Luger, Melinda Gehris, Bill Collins, Babette Haley, Sarah Gater

Dave from the New Hampshire Astronomical Society gave an overview of the local observatory in Hillsborough and explained some of its benefits and amenities. Membership is \$30 for single and \$40 for a family pass, and you'll just need an orientation for your first visit to use the scopes. He explained that we have some the darkest skies in southern NH and while northern NH (The White Mountains) have even darker skies, the turbulent air and weather makes for less desirable sky viewing conditions. The NHAS also conducts viewing events at various schools and libraries, some with 150 people in attendance. In March they do a messier marathon, but not at the observatory due to the lack of permitted sleeping. The Astronomical league was mentioned as a potential state agency to contact about development.

Joe (also from the NHAS) explained how amateur astronomers assist Nasa with their search for exoplanets. He discussed ways of getting kids involved and interested in astronomy and space exploration. Some of the easiest ways to get kids interested is with binoculars and looking at constellations.

The NHAS only has 2 years left on their lease for their current observatory so there was discussion about a new potential site location. A site with unobstructed views to the south and east is the best. The best situation would be to have a long term lease on the land. The NHAS would maintain all the building and equipment and move the current equipment to the new location. The site would have to be well protected with all the expensive equipment.

Joe went on to emphasize how light pollution doubles about every ten years making it increasingly difficult to find proper observing locations. We reviewed some best outdoor lighting practices and the negative effects of light pollution.

Lighting Ordinance

There was discussion about how we can promote the positive impacts of the lighting ordinance. Some suggestions included reaching out to different church groups, after school programs, PTO, Granit State Ambassadors, senior citizens group, DECA, social media. Katherine will look into incorporating DECA to develop a press release and media package to distribute to local and larger regional publications.

Fire Fly Reserve/ Observatory

There was discussion about incorporating all different types of wildlife that are affected by light pollution.

Sky Quality Readings

No updates.

Dark Sky Outreach Events

We discussed some more ideas for events at Grimes field including star parties and a night walk with different astronomical stations. To better focus on the lighting ordinance outreach, it was discussed and decided not to plan any events until after town meeting.

Katherine motioned to adjourn; Susan seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:47 PM.