

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*

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Date: August 28, 2024
To: CUSD Superintendent and Board, Roger Anchartechahar
CC: Camille Leung, Steve Monowitz (Planning), Supvr. Mueller, Gina Quiney, Marisol Escalera Durani (District 3 staff)
From: Midcoast Community Council
Subject: Request for Mitigation of Light Trespass from Farallone View School

We write to request mitigation of the excessive light pollution from the recently installed fixtures at the Farallone View School. This letter elaborates on and confirms communications between members of the community and the MCC at CUSD Board Meetings, the MCC meeting of August 14th, 2024, and on social media. This letter presents a problem statement, suggested mitigations, and background on prior communications between us, indicating that Dark Sky and wildlife lighting concerns were understood and agreed at both CUSD remodels on the Midcoast. [[Light pollution affects human health](#)] A series of photographs is also attached as an illustration of the light and roof issues.

The community, including neighbors and animal farm owners, find the lighting from the school trespasses onto their properties, affecting their sleep and the biological clocks of the livestock sheltered at those farms. In addition, there are likely effects on the wildlife in GGNRA lands to the North of the school. The lighting is too bright, too blue-rich in intensity, and scatters well beyond the school property - especially in the prevalent fog. Our community does not want an "urban" aesthetic on the Midcoast.

Excessive light trespass was repeatedly discussed with CUSD in calls, emails, and at MCC meetings in connection with both the El Granada remodel and the Farallone school remodel, in at least four (4) meetings in early 2024, and in additional meetings and emails in 2023 (see *BACKGROUND*). Even though DarkSky approved fixtures were to have been used, it is clear that there was not proper planning and configuration of these fixtures. Otherwise, there would not be a resulting DarkSky/light pollution problem.

MITIGATIONS SUGGESTED:

To best mitigate the situation at hand, we recommend the following:

1. Change parking lot light heads to wildlife friendly (2200k spectrum intensity), with full dimming capability to allow for the lowest impact and light level at different times of need.
2. Lower light pole height as much as possible to reduce glare.
3. Reduce day and night reflection from white roof
4. Shield building light fixtures with baffles to constrain the light downward & on premises

5. Shielding fixtures which broadcast light off property may become less of a need to the degree that the intensity of light is reduced as recommended above. We are concerned that shielding alone - without a reduction in intensity - will be unacceptable due to the amount of light reflecting in all directions.
6. Adhere to the DarkSky/IES 5 Principles of Responsible Lighting - to avoid the health hazards that can accrue to people, animals and vegetation with over-lighting of Blue-rich LED light - and know how to implement them.
7. Comply with San Mateo County Local Coastal Policies - Sensitive Habitats Component - General Policies Section 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past 2 years, the MCC and CUSD have had multiple collaborative meetings and communications regarding the school remodels, including the unfortunate water shutoff during construction at Farallone View. That latter incident flagged that the State DSA has jurisdiction for design approval on all school facilities, yet seems to omit critical collaborative rework discovery tasks in their planning regimen (e.g. with the local water & sewer districts). An early and proper site assessment would have discovered the wildlife nature of the surrounding environment and planned lighting in accordance with the known impact and dangers to the wildlife in the area. The community was not involved in outreach and review of the lighting plan. Lighting in a coastal zone seems to be another area where the DSA-dominated planning review did not allow involvement of SMC Planning and the MCC - which would likely have avoided this lighting issue.

Nevertheless, over that time, CUSD and the MCC held multiple discussions on the remodels, and in four public meetings discussed the EG remodel and Dark Skies lighting concerns, beginning with an April 12, 2023 MCC meeting where a CUSD presentation did not include a lighting plan: <https://midcoastcommunitycouncil.org/s/2023-04-12-FaralloneView-EG-school-projects-slides.pdf> It appears that no community engagement was attempted before lighting decisions were made on the Farallone View Elementary school.

Following CUSD's public meeting at the EG school, and additional in-person meetings, the MCC agreed with design accommodations at that school which resolved or deferred community concerns about the lack of Dark Skies lighting there: https://midcoastcommunitycouncil.org/s/2024-01-24_EG_remodel_comments_PLN2023-00223-FINAL-9es9.pdf

On Feb 28, 2024 the MCC wrote a letter stressing lighting concerns and requesting that 2200k wildlife friendly light color to be used based on the surrounding environmental conditions: https://midcoastcommunitycouncil.org/s/2024-02-28_letter-EG-Remodel-Revisions-FINAL.pdf

In addition, the MCC and community members had multiple communications with prior Superintendent Sean McPhetridge to the effect that Dark Sky Lighting **would be** installed in the Farallone View School remodel. The conditions described in those communications were not adhered to at Farallone View, as evidenced by recent photographs.

CONCLUSION:

Given our prior history of open communication and collaboration with CUSD on the recent school remodels, and on the need for improved telecommunications Midcoast, and on other local matters, we are hopeful that a speedy mitigation of these lighting concerns can be agreed. We look forward to future collaboration on other school-related matters, such as fencing and improved traffic control. Our objective is that the school campus should blend in with the surrounding environment. Do not hesitate to contact us for further information or to share ideas.

Sincerely,

s/Gus Mattammal, Chair

PHOTOGRAPHS:



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