



CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY ASSOCIATION October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020

The City of Dripping Springs is proud to be part of the night sky preservation movement sweeping Texas. The city continues to experience rapid growth and welcomes its new businesses and residents in the city limits and surrounding area to be a part of the efforts to protect and preserve the night sky.

Territory

The current population of the City of Dripping Springs city limits is estimated to be 3,277. From October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020, the city annexed 0.09 km² and the total size of the city limits is now 22.45 km².

The city continues to be successful in obtaining voluntary compliance in its Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, where state law does not allow the Lighting Ordinance to be applied unilaterally. Many developers want their projects to be good neighbors and part of a dark sky community.

Lighting Projects

The Dripping Springs Sports & Recreation Park Lighting Plan was drafted by EMA Engineering. They consulted with Musco Lighting on the plan. The Lighting Plan will be sent to the International Dark Sky Association to be reviewed for compliance with the Community-Friendly Outdoor Sports Lighting Certification Program Criteria.

The city's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction is much larger than the city limits, so compliance with the Lighting Ordinance in this area is very impactful. The City's Planning Department is creating a database of the properties outside the city limits that are required to comply with the Lighting Ordinance and those that voluntarily comply with the ordinance. The Planning Department plans to create a map that shows the compliant properties.

Lighting Ordinance

The City Council approved a minor amendment to the Lighting Ordinance on April 21, 2019, in response to City Staff, builder, and lighting provider comments regarding clarity and efficiency. The changes included:

1. Simplified exemption of festoon lighting and rope lights including removal of reference to Holiday Lighting and instead treating all temporary lighting the same. It also clarified that these types of low-output lighting do not need shielding.
2. Clarified the ordinance's application in the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ): the only way this applies in the ETJ for buildings is through: (1) variances; and (2) voluntary compliance.
3. Removed dimming options from the ordinance because users were reading the options as requirements. Instead, the dimming options will be available on the city website and the Lighting Plan Application so that users still have access to the tools the city has to assist with dimming. The language now says that dimming can be any method that complies.
4. Added an illustration of how the Kelvin spectrum works.

Sky Quality Meter Readings

Sky Quality readings in various locations throughout the City of Dripping Springs were taken by city staff on August 17, 2020, with clear skies and no moon using a Unihedron SQM-L Sky Quality Meter. The following chart shows the locations, times, and readings.

LOCATION	TIME	READING
Dripping Springs Ranch Park -Outdoor Arena	9:41 pm	20.33
Hidden Springs Ranch HOA Park -Parking Lot	9:49 pm	20.20
Lake Lucy -West End of Loop	9:54 pm	20.05
City Hall -Parking Lot	9:58 pm	19.63
Charro Ranch Park -Parking Lot	10:05 pm	20.4
Sports & Recreation Park -Parking Lot by Adult Softball Fields	10:12 pm	20.07
Founders Memorial Park -Parking Lot by Trail Head Sign	10:17 pm	20.01

Generally, the sky quality has not significantly changed. The sky quality readings at City Hall and Founders Memorial Park slightly improved from previous readings. This may be because some noncompliant light fixtures at both locations were replaced with compliant ones.

The City 's Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget includes funds for the installation of a permanent sky monitor to be installed on City property. The City is working with the Hill Country Alliance on the specifications for the sky monitor.

Working with the City's Electricity Provider

The city continues to work with its electricity provider, the Pedernales Electric Cooperative, to bring noncompliant street and area lighting into compliance with the city's Lighting Ordinance. The Pedernales Electric Cooperative has reported to the city that it has installed sixty-two (62) street and area lights that comply with the city's Lighting Ordinance in the past year. Of these, five (5) street lights replaced nonconforming street lights on city streets, at the city's request.

Programs, Education, and other Outreach

Building Official Sarah Cole attended the Texas Planning Association Annual Conference and participated as a panelist on the Night Planning Panel on November 8, 2019, in Waco, Texas.

City Staff talked with people representing other cities developing lighting ordinances or applying for International Dark Sky Community Designation, such as Jennifer Scola, City Planner, City of Bee Cave.

The city participated in International Dark Sky Week April 19-26.

The city participated in Hays County Friends of the Night Sky activities and programs.

The city provided items for the Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce Welcome Bags for new residents in July:

200 "I Love the Texas Night Sky" stickers with www.idatexas.org; and

200 International Dark Sky-Association and City of Dripping Springs International Dark Sky Community logo stickers with www.darksky.org.



The city's Communications Director, Lisa Sullivan, redesigned the "Passport to the Stars" for the Hays County Friends of the Night Sky, to be used by families at the Hill Country Living Festival + Rainwater Revival on April 4. Due to COVID, the event was moved to a virtual event to be held on October 24, 2020.



City Administrator Michelle Fischer met virtually with Scout Caroline Newby to discuss light pollution and ways she can be an advocate in her community, the City of Austin.

The City Council approved of a Proclamation declaring August - October 2020 and March - May 2021, as "Lights Out Migratory Months" in the City of Dripping Springs, Texas. Almost one hundred people have taken the online pledge to date.


PROCLAMATION
OF THE CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS
PROCLAIMING AUGUST – OCTOBER 2020 AND
MARCH – MAY 2021 AS
“Lights Out Migratory Months”

WHEREAS, the Audubon National Lights Out Program was established in 1999 in Chicago, Illinois and was organized to protect birds from light pollution; and

WHEREAS, the Lights Out Program encourages businesses and community members to turn off exterior lights within a designated timeframe during migratory months to reduce light pollution providing safe, natural migration routes for birds; and

WHEREAS, Audubon is a nonprofit organization partnering with cities nationwide to protect their unique bird species fostering a healthier environment and shared quality of life for all; and

WHEREAS, 1 of every 3 birds migrating through the U.S. in spring passes through Texas, meaning approximately one billion birds travel through the state annually; and

WHEREAS, studies show birds support local economies in places such as the Rio Grande Valley where Nature Tourism, which is dominated by birding, contributes \$300 million to the local economy and supports 4,607 full-time and part-time jobs annually; and

WHEREAS, the Lights Out program will support other city initiatives such as the International Dark Sky Community designation, the Birding Club and Bird City designation that will help us qualify for grants to support Nature Tourism in Dripping Springs benefiting our local economy; and

WHEREAS, the Dripping Springs Lights Out program will offer a pledge to be signed by community members, business owners, and government officials to participate by turning off their lights during the migration periods bi-annually; and

WHEREAS, the Lights Out Program, once proclaimed, will be listed as an official partner program on the Audubon website alongside other cities offering the program.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED by the City Council of Dripping Springs, Texas:

- August through October and March through May shall hereafter be known as “Lights Out Migratory Months” in Dripping Springs, Hays County, Texas.
- Community members, business owners, and government officials are encouraged to sign the pledge stating you will extinguish exterior lights during the specified time frame during Lights Out migratory months.



Bill Foulds, Jr.
 Bill Foulds, Jr., Mayor



Dripping Springs is a well-known corridor for migrating birds during the fall and winter. Migratory birds typically fly at night leaving them vulnerable to light pollution, which causes them to become confused and collide with structures. Lights Out Dripping Springs is the initiative to participate in the national Lights Off Program! Turn off your lights between 11pm-6am September through October and March through May to help reduce light pollution and save our birds from collision! Participate in the pledge below to receive special recognition for joining our efforts!

First and Last Name: _____

Do you pledge to participate in the Lights Out Dripping Springs program by turning off all indoor and outdoor lights during migration periods between 11pm and 6am to reduce light pollution?

Yes No

Are you a business or organization?

Yes No

Business/ Organization Name: _____

If you would like to receive information regarding City of Dripping Springs Birding and Night Sky Programs and Events please provide your email: _____

The first annual Hill Country Night Sky Month, October 2020, is a celebration of the region's night skies and of the hard work that Hill Country communities do to preserve it. The City Council approved a Proclamation declaring the Month of October 2020 as "Hill Country Night Sky Month" in the City of Dripping Springs. The city will promote night sky education and events in October in Dripping Springs and the Hill Country. This event has caused cities, parks, and advocacy groups in the region to collaborate on night sky activities and outreach and to think about how they can help each other by promoting the night skies regionally.



**PROCLAMATION
OF THE CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS
PROCLAIMING OCTOBER 2020 AS**

"Hill Country Night Sky Month"

- WHEREAS,** the aesthetic beauty and wonder of star-filled skies are the heritage of all humankind and locally to the inhabitants of Dripping Springs and are therefore worthy of celebration; and
- WHEREAS,** the experience of standing beneath a star-filled night sky inspires feelings of wonder and awe, and may encourage interest in science and nature especially among young people; and
- WHEREAS,** the opportunity to view star-filled skies attracts tourists to our region and therefore economic benefit to Dripping Springs; and
- WHEREAS,** preserving the rich historic heritage and starry night skies of Dripping Springs is important to its citizens; and
- WHEREAS,** "light pollution," which is wasted light that performs no function or task and artificial light that goes where it is not supposed to go, is created by glare, light trespass, sky glow, and overlighting; and
- WHEREAS,** light pollution wastes natural resources amounting to at least \$2 billion per year and contributes to diminished American energy independence; and
- WHEREAS,** the historical view of the night skies has been eroding in many nearby areas and generations are growing up with limited, if any, view of the wonders of the universe; and
- WHEREAS,** the influx of people into the Texas Hill Country region and the accompanying light pollution from area lighting fixtures has been steadily on the rise; and
- WHEREAS,** solving the problem of light pollution involves making better use of outdoor lighting to direct light down to where it is needed instead of upward into the sky, putting outdoor lights on timers and using outdoor lighting only where necessary; and
- WHEREAS,** Hill Country communities are increasingly dedicated to the preservation of the region's night skies, as evidenced by the frequent educational activities conducted in our region and by the increasing number of places in our region recognized as International Dark-Sky Places by the International Dark-Sky Association, including: Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, South Llano State Park, the City of Dripping Springs, the Wimberley Valley, the City of Fredericksburg, the City of Horseshoe Bay, U Bar U Camp & Retreat Center, River Hills Neighborhood of Travis County, and Lost Creek Neighborhood of Travis County; and
- WHEREAS,** this regional effort and the preservation and celebration of our night skies is worthy of a month-long celebration.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED by the City Council of Dripping Springs, Texas:

1. October 2020 shall hereafter be known as "Hill Country Night Sky Month" in Dripping Springs, Hays County, Texas.
2. That the City Council encourages citizens to enjoy the night sky and to participate in the Dripping Springs and the Hill Country region's events and programs celebrating the night sky and promoting the ways in which communities are working to preserve it.
3. That the City Council encourages citizens to learn about light pollution and why it matters, night sky friendly lighting, and lighting regulations, and to implement practices and lighting improvements that will reduce light pollution, thereby preserving our night skies.

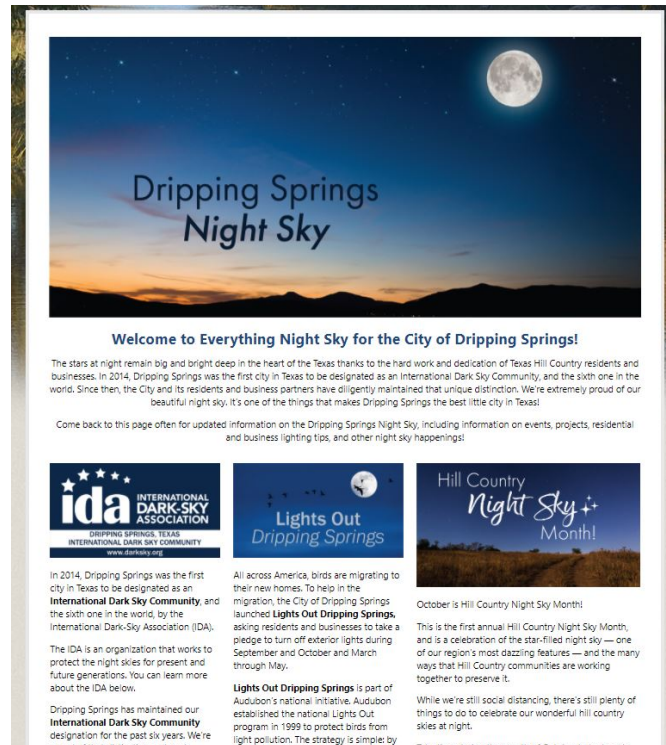


Bill Foulds, Jr.
Bill Foulds, Jr., Mayor

City Administrator Michelle Fischer participated in the Hill Country Alliance Leadership Summit September 23-25 and served on a panel that discussed the night skies and tourism.

The city is a sponsor of the Hill Country Living Festival + Rainwater Revival, which was rescheduled from April 4th to October 24^h and changed to virtual event. City representatives will give a lighting presentation during the event.

The city created a new website page on the city’s website on night sky that includes programs and public outreach materials, http://www.cityofdrippingsprings.com/page/city.night_sky.



Arts & Culture

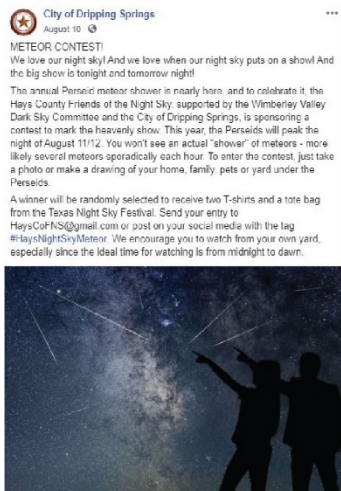
The city helped promote the Hays County Friends of the Night Sky photo/drawing contest for the Perseid Meteor Shower.

Social Media

Due to COVID, the city couldn’t have many in-person events. Some night sky events had to be canceled. So, the city put its efforts into promoting what it could do virtually via the city’s social media platforms. The city even promoted the US Census and being counted by connecting it to its dark skies. City conducted the following social media promotions, reaching close to 17,300 people throughout the year:

Globe at Night	March
International Dark Sky Week	April
Census	July

Perseid Contest August
 Lights Out Dripping Springs September



Actual Data:

Globe at Night	March 11	Reached 1,882 people, with 26 comments, reactions and shares
International Dark Sky Week	April 19-26	Reached 2,844 people, with 92 comments, reactions and shares

Census	July 21	Reached 404 people, with 3 comments, reactions and shares
Perseid Showers Contest	August 5-9	Reached 1,511 people, with 31 comments, reactions and shares
Lights Out Dripping Springs	September 9	Kicked off September 9, will run through Sept and Oct. Already reached 10,750 people, with 1,007 comments, reactions and shares through September 30, 2020.

New Construction

In the past year, the city’s Building Department issued 765 New Residential Permits for a total of 3,077,998 square feet, and issued the following commercial building permits for projects complying with the Lighting Ordinance:

- twelve New Commercial Building Permits for a total of 355,176 square feet;
- sixteen Commercial Tenant Finish Out Permits for a total of 45,334 square feet;
- seven Commercial Remodel Permits for a total of 25,769 square feet; and
- two Commercial Addition Permits total of 2,768square feet.

All permitted commercial and residential buildings were required to obtain approved lighting plans and were/will be inspected after construction for compliance before a certificate of appropriateness was/is issued.

In the city’s Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, there were several variances approved for projects that required compliance with the Lighting Ordinance, including Reds Detail and Reconditioning, StorServ, and Jiffy Lube. Several large developments were under construction that were required to comply with the Lighting Ordinance through Development Agreements, including, retail buildings in Belterra Village, the Belterra Village Apartments, and the Driftwood Land and Golf Club.

The Dripping Springs Independent School District continues to bring nonconforming lighting on district properties into compliance with the Lighting Ordinance and two new schools being built will comply, Walnut Springs Elementary (in city limits) and Elementary School #5 (in Extraterritorial Jurisdiction).



Texas Regional Bank



Flying Fish Swim Academy



Arrowhead Ranch Amenity Center



Western Springs Apartments



Caliterra



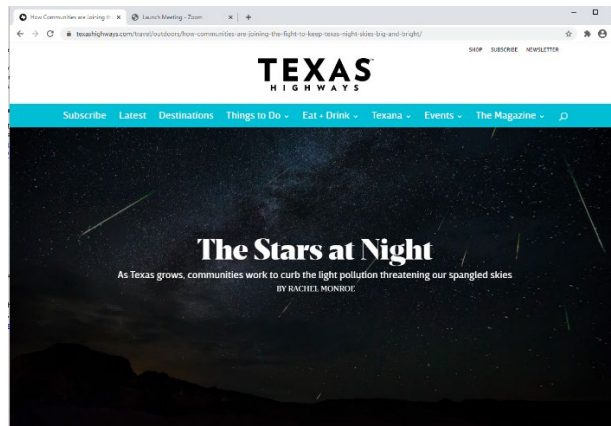
The Retreat at Dripping Springs

Enforcement

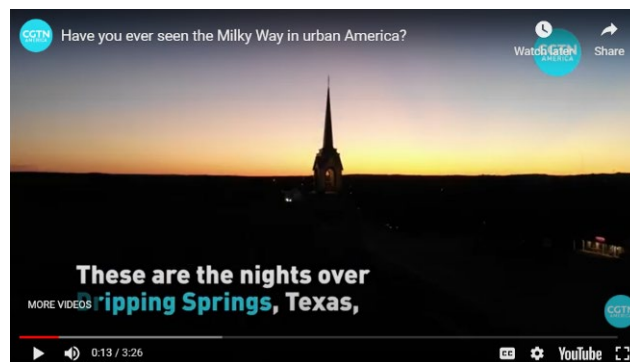
The city's Code Enforcement Inspector continues to enforce the Lighting Ordinance and issues violation warnings as needed. No citations have been issued this past year due to compliance in response to the violation warnings.

Community and Media Relations

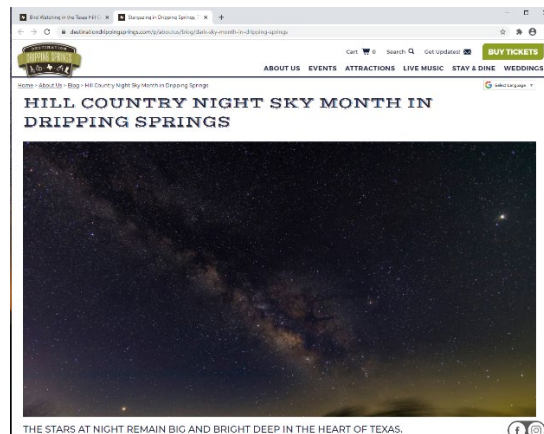
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Stargazing Road Trip, Travel Texas, July 15, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/TravelTexas/photos/a.126201474089015/4112951222080667/?type=3&theater>.



"3 of the Best Stargazing Spots in the Texas Hill Country," San Antonio Things to Do, August 11, 2020, <https://www.sanantoniethingstodo.com/3-of-the-best-stargazing-spots-in-the-texas-hill-country/>.

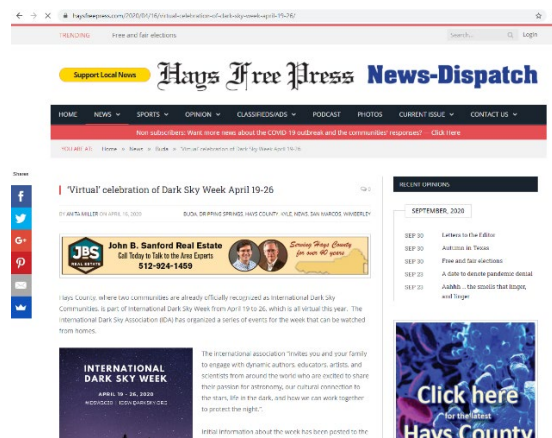
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Headwaters Insert in Community Impact Newspaper, Southwest Austin Dripping Springs Edition, Volume 13, Issue 11, September 24-Oct. 22, 2020.



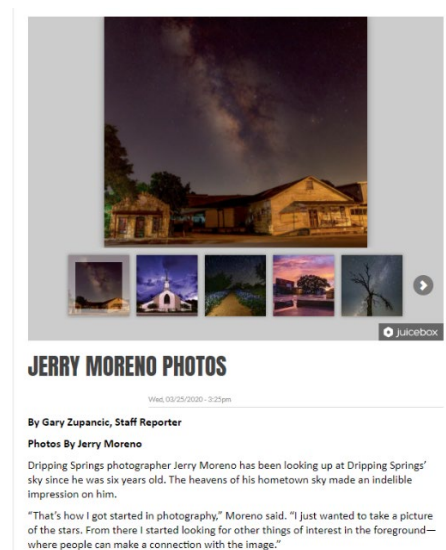
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"Lone Star State Stargazing," Independence Title, April 1, 2020, <https://independencetitle.com/wp-content/uploads/Stargaze.pdf>.

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Engagement with IDA

The city collaborates with the Texas IDA Chapter on a regular basis and city representatives attend chapter meetings.

COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

Due to COVID, the city couldn't have in-person events. Some night sky events had to be canceled or changed to virtual events. The city put its efforts into promoting what it could virtually. This brought about an increase in public engagement through the city's social media platforms.

The city has seen an increase in park use during the pandemic. Outdoor activities, such as stargazing has increased. The city expects an increase in astrotourism and nighttime park use in the future. City staff is planning to promote overnight camping and stargazing in Dripping

Springs Ranch Park. The city will have to continue to promote night sky education and programs virtually.

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