

FOR RELEASE 01/06/15 OR AFTER

Contact: Stan Stubbe at polcouncil@gmail.com or 610 972-9803

SOUTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP WINS DARK-SKY COMMENDATION

At South Coventry Township's January Supervisor's meeting, the PA Outdoor Lighting Council presented a Night Sky Conservation Area award to the Township for its continuing efforts in controlling light pollution. The NSCA award, also previously extended to Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, recognizes municipalities and organizations that have demonstrated a significant commitment to controlling light pollution within the Hopewell Big Woods.

The award recognizes South Coventry Township for adopting and enforcing an effective outdoor lighting ordinance. When updating the Township Zoning Code in 2001, South Coventry Township looked to the PA Outdoor Lighting Council's model lighting ordinance as the template for their lighting regulations. The resultant ordinance established appropriate lighting levels to promote effective seeing, safety and security while minimizing glare and wasted light by requiring that lighting be shielded to focus lighting on the intended target, not into peoples' eyes and neighbors' properties. Craig Kologie, of Castle Valley Consultants and South Coventry Township's Engineer, stated: "The ordinance requires the installation of lighting that meets recognized safety and security standards while also preserving and protecting the dark skies cherished by Township residents.'

Successful ordinance enforcement is readily visible within the Township during hours of darkness with examples such as the St. Thomas Moore Church parking lot lighting, the sign lighting on the Malvern Bank building, the Agway Garden Center sign, the Old Philadelphia Public House parking lot lighting, the Shoppes at Pughtown parking area and the entrance lighting at La Maison Restaurant on Old Ridge Rd. in Coventryville, to name a few.

Martin Gagné, owner of La Maison, aka Martin's Kitchen, remarked: "When I applied to the Township to remodel my home on Old Ridge Road in Coventryville, to accommodate a restaurant to serve the very finest cuisine, one of the requirements was that any proposed outdoor lighting was to be done in accordance with the Township's lighting code. I must admit that I had not given exterior lighting any previous thought other than to be sure that visitors would be able to safely move about as they entered and exited the restaurant. The ordinance required the lighting to be directed downward so it stayed on my property and didn't shine into visitors' or drivers' eyes or up into the sky. As an amateur astronomer myself, I appreciated restricting light from polluting the night sky. The end result was a very pleasing lighting installation and I was grateful that the Township provided me with guidance to do it right."

Jamie Bentley, owner of the building on Rt. 23 that formerly housed Bentley Graphics, expressed his frustration with the floodlights on the adjacent bank building and reported

that he remodeled the lighting of his main parking area, replacing the glary inefficient wall-mounted lighting with fully shielded pole-mounted lighting and installing a special shield on the dusk-to-dawn light in the upper parking lot to direct all of the light downward instead of up into the sky and into peoples' eyes. He said "I think all businesses have an obligation to keep their lighting just on their property."

According to Township Supervisor Millie Donnell, "We find our lighting ordinance to be effective in controlling light pollution and keeping the sky over South Coventry dark. It successfully controls excessive, insufficient, poorly aimed and inadequately shielded outdoor lighting. The benefits of the ordinance's effectiveness are readily visible as one travels through the Township. The Board of Supervisors took care in designing and installing the exterior lighting at the Township Building and the results demonstrate our commitment to good lighting practices. As existing commercial properties in the Township make improvements, changes or upgrades, their lighting will also have to comply with the current ordinance."

Hopewell Big Woods, the object of the Night Sky Conservation Award is the last large, unbroken forest left in southeastern Pennsylvania, an important natural area and an exceptional resource with hundreds of plant and bird species, pristine forest, unique wetlands and clean streams and an threatened dark night sky. It's a 73,000 acre area south of the Schuylkill River that includes portions of Chester and Berks Counties and all or portions of South Coventry, North Coventry, West Vincent, Union, Robeson, East Nantmeal, Warwick, Elverson, New Morgan, West Nantmeal and Birdsboro as well as French Creek State Park and Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site.

Charles Jacob, Warwick Township Supervisor, observed that the Township is currently in the process of upgrading its comprehensive plan and responsible outdoor lighting will be an important element of it to protect the Hopewell Big Woods night sky.