

"Where People and Trees Have Deep Roots and Grow Strong"



Somerset TOWN JOURNAL



Volume 68 • No. 8

August 2023

LED Street Project Receives Green Light

By **Barton Rubenstein, Chair, Environment Committee,**
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At its July 10 meeting, the Town Council voted unanimously to move forward with installing LED streetlights in our Town. This is a milestone moment. Flashback...Over 20 years ago, our family moved into Somerset on Dorset Avenue, to find a Pepco LED Pilot Program light in front of our house. This was the result of a large effort to coax Pepco into installing LED streetlights in Somerset. Unfortunately, this process has dragged on for various reasons for over two decades, frustration followed by more frustration. But happily, the final moment arrived this past month, and during the next year, new LED lights will finally be installed on our light poles. Here are the main points to celebrate:

1. LED lights will use about 80% less energy. This will save us money on our Town's electric bills and greatly reduce our carbon footprint.
2. LED lights will have a warm 3000K color. Ideally, the Environment Committee recommended 2700K which is a slight warmer light used in San Francisco and other cities nationwide, but unfortunately this is the lowest kelvin rating that Pepco is presently offering. 3000K is not the dangerous 4000K blue light that is harmful to nature. Thus, the Town Council felt that the new lights

would be sufficiently similar to the existing lights (as demonstrated during the pilot studies).

3. LED lights will all be 50 watts. This is the lowest wattage/brightness available (from a choice of 50, 70, 100, and 150), which will produce light that is approximately the same as you presently see. As of this writing, the one exception will be a 70-watt bulb at the intersection of Dorset and Warwick. Lower wattages are the best for the animal kingdom (e.g., birds, deer, and humans) because using bright lights at night disrupts our circadian clock. Thus, using the lowest wattage bulbs is the best solution.
4. LED lights are focused. The present lights have dispersed light that can pass into resident's homes. The new lights will focus all of their light downward onto the streets.
5. LED lights can have glare protectors in the future, which can further focus and soften the light. After the new lights have been installed, the Town will seek resident feedback for specific light poles and consider installing glare protectors as needed.
6. The Town is also focused on making sure tree branches next to the light fixtures are properly trimmed and maintained, which will allow the new LED lights to do their job!

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7. It would be good to become a Dark Sky Community, focused on minimizing light pollution. This LED project will minimize dispersed light, use low LED wattage bulbs with a low kelvin rating, and with the help of residents minimizing the amount of night lights they use on their properties, we can all contribute toward becoming a Dark Sky Community (<https://www.darksky.org/>).

My wife and I love to take walks in the evening, passing longtime resident and activist **Lucy Freeman** (Falstone) and other neighbors along the way. We love the quiet of the night, the occasional sighting of foxes and other small animals, and the warm light that the streetlights provide. We hope to see you out there enjoying our large tree canopy, the beautiful moonlight and the evening fragrances!



*A hummingbird celebrates the Town Council's decision in our backyard.
Photo credit: Mother Earth Project Cofounder Sabrina Rubenstein*

NEW SOMERSET WEBSITE LAUNCHED



Somerset's new website has launched! You'll find it at the same URL as the old one: www.townofsomerset.com.

Please check it out and let Town Hall know if you have any questions or comments.