AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF AWENDAW, SOUTH CAROLINA, TO AMEND TITLE XV: LAND USAGE, CHAPTER 153: ZONING CODE, GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF AWENDAW, SOUTH CAROLINA, BY AMENDING SECTION 153.009 DEFINITIONS, ADOPTING A NEW SECTION 153.065 OUTDOOR LIGHTING REGULATIONS, ALONG WITH NEW SECTIONS 153.066 THROUGH 153.072 THERETO, PROVIDING FOR NEW OUTDOOR LIGHTING REGULATIONS.

WHEREAS, the Town of Awendaw recognizes the importance of regulating outdoor lighting to preserve the natural night environment and reduce sky glow, glare, and light trespass; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Awendaw is committed to promoting energy efficiency and reducing energy costs through the implementation of outdoor lighting standards; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Awendaw seeks to ensure that exterior lighting is designed to illuminate surroundings effectively without causing annoyance or discomfort to the public and neighboring property users due to glare and light trespass; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Awendaw aims to enhance the quality of life for its residents by adopting measures that protect the night sky and maintain the aesthetic appeal of the community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Town Council of Awendaw that the following standards for outdoor lighting are hereby established.

LIGHTING REGULATIONS

SECTION 153.065 TITLE & EFFECTIVE DATE

(A) Title. This ordinance is hereby officially known and cited as the Dark Sky Ordinance of the Town of Awendaw, South Carolina. References herein to "the ordinance" or "this ordinance" shall be interpreted as references to this Dark Sky Ordinance.

(B) Effective Date. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after the date of its adoption by the Town Council of the Town of Awendaw, adopted this 18th day of May, 2026.

SECTION 153.066 AUTHORITY; CONFLICT; ABROGATION; SEVERANCE

(A) Authority. This ordinance is enacted pursuant to the authority conferred upon the Town of Awendaw by the South Carolina General Assembly to adopt regulations designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of its citizenry.

(B) Conflict of Law. This ordinance shall be constructed so as to not conflict with any provision of state or federal law. However, the provisions of this ordinance shall control if more restrictive than other local, state, or federal laws or regulations.

(C) Abrogation. This ordinance is not intended to repeal, abrogate, annul, impair, or interfere with any existing vested rights established pursuant to law.

(D) Severance. If any portion of this ordinance is legally invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, all remaining provisions shall continue to be of full force and effect.

SECTION 153.067 PURPOSE

The Town of Awendaw hereby finds and declares that the public interest and general welfare of the residents of the Town of Awendaw will be served through the creation of unified lighting regulations and criteria to preserve the Town of Awendaw's rural appearance and prevent further light trespass. The intent and purpose of this ordinance is to regulate outdoor lighting so that exterior lights minimize sky glow, glare and light trespass. Adherence to the standards contained in the ordinance should lower energy cost, yet illuminate surroundings without causing annoyance to the public and users of property near the light source by reason of glare and light trespass.

SECTION 153.009 DEFINITIONS

"Fully-shielded" - A luminaire designed or shielded in such a manner that no light is emitted, either directly or indirectly, at or above a horizontal plane running through the lowest light-emitting part of the luminaire.

"Glare" - Lighting entering the eye directly from luminaires or indirectly from reflective surfaces that causes visual discomfort or reduced visibility.

"IES" - The Illuminating Engineering Society of North America, a nonprofit professional organization of lighting specialists that has established recommended design standards for various lighting applications.

"Kelvin" is a measure of a light's color temperature. While this is traditionally a measurement of heat it is also related to appearance, therefore it is used as a guide to colors. Color temperatures greater than 4,000 Kelvin are bluish white and are "cooler" colors. Color temperatures less than 3,000 Kelvin are yellowish and are "warm."

"Light pollution" - Artificial light at night traveling into areas where it is not needed or wanted. This can be in the form of light trespass, glare, or sky glow.

"Light trespass" - Light emitted by a luminaire that falls outside the boundaries of the property or right-of-way on which the luminaire is located.

"Lumen" - The amount of light that falls upon an area of one square meter, every point of which is one meter distant from a source of one candela. Therefore, a one-candela source produces a total of 12.57 lumens.

"Luminaire" - A complete lighting unit, including the light source, housing, optics, electronics, and other necessary components for the purpose of providing outdoor illumination.

"Mounting height" - The height of the photometric center of a luminaire above grade level.

"Seasonal lighting" - Outdoor lighting that is portable, temporary, decorative, and used in connection with holidays and traditions.

"Shielding" - A design feature or a device that is applied to a luminaire to prevent its luminous output from being visible from selected locations or horizontal and/or vertical angles.

"Sky glow" - The brightening of the night sky that results from the reflection of radiation (visible and non-visible), scattered from the constituents of the atmosphere (gaseous molecules, aerosols, and particulate matter), in the direction of the observer. Sky glow is caused by light directed or reflected upwards or sideways and reduces one's ability to view the night sky.

SECTION 153.068 APPLICABILITY, EXEMPTIONS AND PROHIBITIONS

(A) Applicability. These lighting requirements apply to all new construction and major and minor subdivisions.

(B) Exemptions.

(1) Lighting requirements mandated by Federal or State law with superseding authority, including but not limited to:

1. Navigation lighting systems regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration and the US Coast Guard.
2. Any contradictory South Carolina Adopted Building Code or Department of Transportation illumination requirements.
3. Lighting for worker safety as mandated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.
4. Temporary lighting used by authorized first responders during emergency procedures.

(2) Temporary and semi-permanent lighting approved by the Town of Awendaw for special events, festivals, and community benefits.

(3) Seasonal lighting.

(4) Underwater lighting in fountains, swimming pools, and other water features.

(C) Prohibitions

(1) Lighting systems must not interfere with the safe movement of motor vehicles. Any lighting that distracts or disables the vision of a motor vehicle operator (e.g., excessively bright or rapid blinking, flashing, and/or motion video) or contributes to traffic control confusion (e.g., sources resembling or imitating traffic or railroad signals) is prohibited.

(2) Beacons and searchlights, except for emergency use by authorized first responders.

(3) Nuisance lighting that creates excessive glare or light trespass such that it has a significant and ongoing negative impact on nearby lots, buildings or roads.

SECTION 153.069 LIGHTING CRITERIA

(A) General Requirements

(1) Lighting shall be from a concealed light source fixture and with effective provisions made to avoid light trespass onto adjoining properties, roadways, or in any way interfere with the vision of oncoming motorists.

(2) Lighting shall conform to applicable Building Code requirements and not exceed the maximum allowable standards.

(B) Shielding. All site lighting must be fully-shielded.

(C) Lighting Color. All lamps shall have a correlated color temperature no greater than 3000 Kelvin (K).

(D) Height.

(1) For residential or agricultural use, the mounting height of all exterior lighting is limited to 12 feet from the average surrounding grade.

(2) For commercial and other non-residential uses, the mounting height of all exterior lighting is limited to 18 feet from the average surrounding grade.

(3) Building lighting is limited to the height of the building on which it is located.

(4) Sport field lighting shall follow the height requirements listed in Section 153.071 (B)(2).

(E) Building lighting.

(1) Directional luminaries used for building façade illumination are allowed if they are shielded and aimed to hit their target such that the light is contained by architectural elements.

(2) Floodlights are allowed, but are subject to the standards in this section and Section 153.070 Lighting levels.

(F) Landscape Lighting. Landscape lighting is allowed if it does not exceed 450 lumens and is aimed such that the light source cannot be seen from any reasonable viewing point on an adjacent lot.

SECTION 153.070 LIGHTING LEVELS

(A) Conservation Zoning District

(1) Lighting levels per lot shall be limited to 5,000 lumens per acre within the Conservation Zoning District.

(B) Agricultural and Residential Zoning Districts

(1) Lighting levels per lot shall be limited to 10,000 lumens per acre within the Agricultural and Residential Zoning Districts.

(C) Office residential, General Commercial, and Town Center Zoning District

(1) Lighting levels per lot shall be limited to 20,000 lumens per acre within Office Residential, General Commercial, and Town Center Zoning Districts.

SECTION 153.071 SPORTS FIELD LIGHTING

(A) Applicability. Sports Field lighting shall conform to the following requirements.

(B) General.

(1) All lighting fixtures must be equipped with a glare control package (e.g., louvers, shields, or similar devices) and aimed so their beams are directed and fall within the primary playing area.

(2) Outdoor sports field lighting is limited to 30 feet from the average surrounding grade.

(3) The hours of operation for the lighting system for any game or event shall not continue for more than one hour after the end of the game or event.

SECTION 153.072 STREET LIGHTING

Where provided, all fixtures installed for the purpose of illuminating public and private streets must:

(A) Be fully shielded;
(B) Comply with 153.069(C): Lighting Color; and
(C) If applicable, comply with all County or SCDOT requirements for location and placement in the right-of-way.

SECTION 153.073 LIGHTING PLAN REQUIRED

(A) Submittal: Whenever a building, subdivision, site plan, or outdoor lighting permit is applied for, an outdoor lighting plan must be submitted along with a compliance statement that the proposed work will comply with all [ordinance] requirements. The outdoor lighting plan must follow one of the following:
    (1) Schedule Method: Lighting plans must include a table with the following information:
        1. Luminaire identifications (i.e., manufacturer, model number, type);
        2. Luminaire quantities;
        3. Installation locations; and
        4. Lumen outputs for each.
    (2) Calculation Method: Available for all project types but required for sports lighting and when specifically requested by the planning manager; an outdoor lighting design shall be prepared by a certified lighting professional or licensed professional engineer using lighting design software and Luminaire .ies files. This outdoor lighting plan shall include:
        1. Luminaire identification (model number), installation locations, mounting heights, targeted directions, buildings, and other physical objects within the site that could affect the lighting outcome.
(B) Review: Submitted spreadsheets, site lighting plans, and compliance affidavits shall be subject to review and approval by the Planning Manager, or designee.
(C) Appeals: Any appeals related to decisions regarding outdoor lighting shall be heard before the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Be it further ordained that the Town Council declares its intention that the "Pending Ordinance Doctrine" be effective upon first reading of this ordinance.

THIS ORDINANCE SHALL BE EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY UPON FINAL READING

Chris Crolley, Mayor
Town of Awendaw

First reading: January 15, 2026

Planning Commission Review and Recommendation: February 17, 2026

Public Hearing: April 2, 2026

Second and Final Reading: May 18, 2026

Takeya White, CMC

Town Clerk