

From: Colette Long [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, June 12, 2026 1:35 PM
To: Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Public Comment - June 15 CC Meeting - Item 2.a

Mayor Kate and Members of the City Council,

I am writing to express support for the Starkweather Path/Bay Trail Lighting project. As a resident of San Rafael, a nurse practitioner in OB/GYN, and as a woman, I am acutely aware of the ways that we can and need to improve the safety of all neighborhoods in our communities. Personally, I will not walk anywhere after dark that is not adequately lit due to concerns for my own safety. I am privileged to have the ability to drive places when there are not adequate safety measures in place for me to walk or bike, but this is not true for all of us. Please consider all members of the community in your decision.

In healthcare, as should be in city planning, if it is a matter of safety, it should take top priority over any other conflicting priorities.

Thank you for your consideration,
Colette Pinsker-Long



June 12, 2026

Mayor Kate Colin

kate.colin@cityofsanrafael.org

RE: Opposition to the Proposed Lighting of the Starkweather Path – Canal Neighborhood Active Transportation

Dear Mayor Kate Colin,

We are writing to express our concerns surrounding the proposed lighting segment of the Canal Neighborhood Active Transportation Lighting Project along the Jean & John Starkweather Shoreline Park Path in San Rafael. We urge the City to exclude the Starkweather Path segment from the proposed lighting plan. Furthermore, we recommend [DarkSky Approved](#) lighting fixtures in any project, including this one, where lighting is required.

Golden Gate Bird Alliance is a non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire people to protect Bay Area birds and our shared natural environment. For over 100 years we have been a leader in bird conservation and habitat protection. Our 7,000 members and supporters envision a world where birds, wildlife, and all people flourish together.

The Jean & John Starkweather Shoreline Park Path lies adjacent to tidal marsh and shoreline habitats that support a diverse array of wildlife, including resident and migratory birds that utilize San Francisco Bay as part of the Pacific Flyway.

While we understand the desire to improve transportation infrastructure and public safety, we believe the installation of new nighttime lighting in this location would create unnecessary ecological impacts that are inconsistent with regional conservation goals and the growing body of scientific literature regarding artificial light at night.

Millions of birds pass through the Bay Area annually as they travel between breeding and wintering grounds. Many of these species migrate at night, relying on natural light cues, including the moon and stars, to navigate. Artificial lighting has been shown to disrupt these natural behaviors by attracting, disorienting, and altering the movements of migratory birds.

Recent research has demonstrated that artificial light at night is one of the strongest predictors of migratory bird stopover density. Horton et al. (2023) found that skyglow, the landscape level illumination of the night sky caused by artificial lighting, was a top predictor of increased migratory stopovers. This effect can draw birds into developed areas where they face increased risks from collisions, predation, vehicles, pollution, and other anthropogenic hazards. Even relatively localized lighting installations contribute cumulatively to regional skyglow and can influence bird behavior across broad landscapes.

Research has also shown that artificial lighting can cause birds to alter their migratory routes, increasing travel distances and energy expenditures. Migratory birds operate within narrow energetic margins, and disruptions that force birds to expend additional energy can reduce survival and reproductive success.

Beyond birds, artificial lights at night negatively affect insects and other wildlife. Numerous nocturnal insects are attracted to and trapped by artificial lights, leading to increased mortality and disruption of natural ecological processes. Because insects are a critical food source for birds and many other animals, these impacts can reverberate throughout the food web. The ecological value of marsh habitats depends not only on the habitat itself, but also on the natural nighttime conditions that sustain these interconnected relationships.

Importantly, the Starkweather Path traverses an area where natural darkness remains an ecological resource.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the City of San Rafael remove the Jean & John Starkweather Shoreline Park Path segment from the proposed lighting project. Doing so would help protect migratory birds, preserve the ecological integrity of adjacent marsh habitats, reduce contributions to regional skyglow, and demonstrate the City's commitment to balancing public infrastructure improvements with environmental stewardship.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss wildlife-friendly alternatives that meet community needs while minimizing impacts to the Bay's natural resources.

Sincerely,



Glenn Phillips
Executive Director

From: Jana Zanetto [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2026 3:33 PM
To: Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Public Comment - June 15 CC Meeting - Item 2.a

Mayor Kate and Members of the City Council,

I am writing to you to express my support for lighting on the Starkweather Path/Bay Trail. The pathway is used by hundreds of people daily, so just a couple hundred people against the lighting in a survey should not be taken as the will of the people. In fact, residents of the Canal area outside Spinnaker Point and Baypoint Lagoon are very supportive of the current lighting plan. It is also supported by the San Rafael Police Department, as lighting improves real and perceived safety for more vulnerable trail users, such as girls and women. In addition, lighting can highlight potholes or other trail hazards. I hope the trail will remain lit until at least 10 pm to ensure this safety.

Please support the current lighting plan. Thank you for reading my opinion.

Janet Zanetto
San Rafael

From: Katy Vanoni [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, June 12, 2026 3:02 PM
To: Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Public Comment - June 15 CC Meeting - Item 2.a

Mayor Kate and Members of the City Council,

I am writing in support of lighting the Shoreline/Starkweather Path. Funding for this is part of a grant received by San Rafael in 2023. There are ways to mitigate the minor issues brought up in opposition. This will bring many benefits to the residents there, and overall wellbeing and healthy activity to the adjacent communities.

Whether you are an occasional walker or an expert cyclist, even small, dark areas are immediate signals to limit activity. Lights that are designed appropriately for particular neighborhoods are a way to encourage activity; they are an asset for outdoor spaces, for increased walking, riding and playing.

When neighbors are able to stay outdoors, people perceive more safety and belonging. Families are healthier than if they felt the need to hunker indoors with less interaction between neighbors. Trust is built up.

Lighting would greatly benefit pedestrians and cyclists, allowing them to avoid potholes and other pathway hazards. For the thousands already using the Bay Trail, it makes sense to completely light the usable areas. It is also necessary to minimize disruption in sensitive areas.

It is important to address the endangered species there (ie, the California Ridgeway Rail). My counterpoint is that California has a strong Marine Protection Area plan, and in these areas, much of the bayshore ecosystems are coming back to life. There is a large Marin Islands State Marine Park just outside of the Shoreline path, surrounding the Marin islands. This can be supported to improve the larger area.

Although some Spinnaker residents oppose the extended lighting, the impact is minimal and would benefit those who frequently use and need the path and the overall community.

Thank you,
Katy Vanoni
Resident, San Rafael

Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods
PO Box 151485
San Rafael, CA 94915-1485

Dear Mayor Colin and Council members
Cc: Paul Navazio, Interim City Manager, Lindsay Lara, City Clerk

June 12, 2026

Re: Shoreline Park (the Starkweather Path), the San Francisco Bay Trail, and Canal
Neighborhood Active Transportation Enhancement Project

Tonight the Council is being asked to choose between two alternatives regarding lighting along Starkweather Path. The first is to “include only waist-high bollards” and the second is “to continue with the scope of work for the proposed lighting as previously presented,” which is “a mix of 15-foot high overhead small area lights.”

We ask that the Council consider a third alternative - that of no lighting at all.

The Starkweather Path is part of the San Francisco Bay Trail overseen by the [Metropolitan Transportation Commission \(.gov\)](#) whose “guidelines provide goals and direction for site planning and trail design to facilitate achievement of the Bay Trail vision.” This policy applies to the City of San Rafael’s planning of the Starkweather Trail, mandating, “*that trail development respect[s] wildlife habitats...*”

The Federation is voicing its concern that the Spinnaker Point and Bay Point Lagoon neighborhoods were not included in the development of these two options even though their residences are adjacent to the path in question. Additionally, a subsequent survey indicated that the majority of the respondents from those neighborhoods and the Canal Neighborhood agreed that, “*lighting will negatively impact the surrounding environment.*” (Staff report)

All of San Rafael’s neighborhoods are important and should be included in the planning regarding any project directly affecting them. The City has committed to inclusivity and transparency and the Starkweather Path project is another example of where this commitment should be exercised. The City, responsible for a portion of the San Francisco Bay Trail, should include a study of the impact of lighting on wildlife in this fragile environment.

Sincerely yours,

Amy Likover
Federation of San Rafael President