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For Immediate Release

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At the request of the Town of Southern Pines, Duke Progress Energy will begin in late December 2014 to transition all sodium and mercury vapor street lights in Town to LED. By July 2015, the almost 750 Town street lights will have been converted to LED.

Town Council and Town staff have been exploring LED street light options for some time. Town Manager Reagan Parsons explains, "The Town began looking at LED alternatives for street lighting dating back to 2011. With continued improvements in the technology and the creation of more favorable rates, switching to LED means a more environmentally friendly, brighter and efficient light source."

Again in early 2013, it was determined that the cost to transition was too high. Councilman Fred Walden revived the issue again in early 2014 and staff looked again and found that this year costs came down significantly. In August of 2014, Duke Progress Energy agreed to test pilot a few 75 Watt LEDs and the 50 Watt LEDs on street lights near the Pool Park in Southern Pines. A few residents noticed and said they liked the brighter 75 Watt versions.

Walden noted, "LED lights are brighter, use less energy, last longer, and might save us a little money." Initially, cost savings was a primary motivation to explore the switch but, ultimately, it was determined that for approximately the same annual costs the quality and efficiency of lighting across Town could be upgraded for about the same annual operating cost.

Southern Pines Police Chief, Robert Temme strongly endorses the move to maintain and upgrade street lights across Town to the 75 Watt. Says Temme, "Crime prevention/reduction interventions involve the modification of environments so that committing crime involves more effort, more risk and lower rewards. Improved street lighting is a feasible, inexpensive and effective method of reducing crime. The new LED lighting, in coordination with other crime prevention strategies conducted by the Southern Pines Police Department, will result in safer communities."

Staff has taken into consideration many factors before deciding to move forward. Parsons continues, "The installation will ultimately better serve public safety, budgetary, and environmental purposes while recognizing the interests of both hobbyist and the local military mission through furtherance of dark skies efforts."

Duke Progress Energy will begin the project near the location where they piloted the LED lights near Pool Park. In addition to them, there are already a few LED street lights in town along Broad Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. LED lights do not lose as much light directionally and are a whiter light. Furthermore, this transition puts the Town in good position to adapt to emerging smart light technology.

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