

MEMORANDUM

Agenda Item No. 7(C)

TO: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

DATE: (Second Reading: 4-21-26)
February 18, 2026

FROM: Geri Bonzon-Keenan
County Attorney

SUBJECT: Ordinance related to
environmental protection;
creating section 24-48.27 of
the Code; providing guidelines
for the protection of sea turtle
nesting

The accompanying ordinance was prepared and placed on the agenda at the request of Prime Sponsor Commissioner Micky Steinberg and Co-Sponsors Senator René García, Vicki L. Lopez and Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado.




Geri Bonzon-Keenan
County Attorney

GBK/smm

MDC001

Date: April 21, 2026

To: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Daniella Levine Cava 
Mayor

Subject: Fiscal Impact and Social Equity Statement for Ordinance Related to Environmental Protection; Creating Section 24-48.27 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, Florida; Providing Guidelines for the Protection of Sea Turtle Nesting; providing severability, inclusion in the Code, and an effective date

This ordinance establishes a framework of recommended best-practice guidelines intended to protect threatened and endangered sea turtles that nest along the Atlantic Ocean beaches within Miami-Dade County. Sea turtles are protected under the federal Endangered Species Act and Florida law, and artificial nighttime lighting has been documented to disorient nesting females and hatchlings, often causing hatchlings to move inland rather than toward the ocean.

The ordinance creates Section 24-48.27 of the Code of Miami-Dade County and provides guidance aimed at minimizing beachfront lighting and other nighttime activities that can negatively affect sea turtles during the nesting season, which generally runs from March 1 through October 31. The guidelines discourage activities such as bonfires, fireworks, and unnecessary nighttime vehicle use on beaches and encourage lighting practices that reduce impacts on sea turtle nesting habitats. These practices include the use of shielded and downward-directed lighting, long-wavelength light sources (such as red or amber lighting), reduced lighting intensity, and measures to prevent lighting from being visible from the beach.

The ordinance also encourages lighting and design practices for new and existing development, including shielding exterior lighting, minimizing reflective surfaces, installing tinted or treated glass, managing interior lighting visible from the beach, and implementing vegetation or structural barriers to reduce light pollution. Additional guidance is provided for signage, parking areas, construction sites, recreational facilities, and publicly owned lighting such as streetlights, parks, and walkways. These measures are intended to improve nesting habitat conditions, reduce hatchling disorientation, and support the long-term conservation of sea turtles in Miami-Dade County in alignment with recommendations from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Social Equity

The proposed ordinance promotes environmental stewardship and supports the protection of threatened and endangered sea turtles that nest along Miami-Dade County's Atlantic coastline. By encouraging lighting practices and other measures that reduce disorientation of nesting turtles and hatchlings, the ordinance seeks to improve coastal habitat conditions and support long-term conservation efforts. The recommendations contained in this ordinance apply broadly to beachfront properties and activities and are not expected to disproportionately impact any particular community or population group.

Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners
Page 2

Fiscal Impact

The implementation of these guidelines will not have a fiscal impact on Miami-Dade County, as the proposed amendment will not require additional staffing resources nor generate additional operational expenses.



Roy Coley
Chief Utilities and Regulatory Services Officer



MEMORANDUM
(Revised)

TO: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

DATE: April 21, 2026

FROM: 
Gen Bonzon-Keenan
County Attorney

SUBJECT: Agenda Item No. 7(C)

Please note any items checked.

- “3-Day Rule” for committees applicable if raised**
- 6 weeks required between first reading and public hearing**
- 4 weeks notification to municipal officials required prior to public hearing**
- Decreases revenues or increases expenditures without balancing budget**
- Budget required**
- Statement of fiscal impact required**
- Statement of social equity required**
- Ordinance creating a new board requires detailed County Mayor’s report for public hearing**
- No committee review**
- Applicable legislation requires more than a majority vote (i.e., 2/3’s present ____, 2/3 membership ____, 3/5’s ____, unanimous ____, majority plus one ____, CDMP 7 vote requirement per 2-116.1(3)(h) or (4)(c) ____, CDMP 2/3 vote requirement per 2-116.1(3) (h) or (4)(c) ____, CDMP 9 vote requirement per 2-116.1(4)(c) (2) ____) to approve**
- Current information regarding funding source, index code and available balance, and available capacity (if debt is contemplated) required**

Approved _____ Mayor
Veto _____
Override _____

Agenda Item No. 7(C)
4-21-26

ORDINANCE NO. _____

ORDINANCE RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION; CREATING SECTION 24-48.27 OF THE CODE OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA; PROVIDING GUIDELINES FOR THE PROTECTION OF SEA TURTLE NESTING; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY, INCLUSION IN THE CODE, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE

WHEREAS, sea turtles are protected by the United States Endangered Species Act of 1973 and Florida Statutes chapter 370; and

WHEREAS, beaches along the Atlantic Ocean, within the boundaries of Miami-Dade County, are utilized by federally protected and state protected sea turtles for nesting; and

WHEREAS, hatchlings are attracted to the brightest source of light, which on an unlit beach would be the reflection of the moon on the ocean; and

WHEREAS, artificial nighttime lighting directly affects and disorients adult sea turtles and hatchlings, resulting in losses in turtle populations; and

WHEREAS, sea turtle nesting season in Florida generally occurs between May 1 and October 31; however, Sunny Isles Beach begins its sea turtle nesting season on March 1; and

WHEREAS, the Miami-Dade County Sea Turtle Conservation Program was established in 1980 in response to disoriented hatchlings found along A1A in Miami Beach; and

WHEREAS, from March to October of each year, the Miami-Dade County Sea Turtle Conservation Program surveys over 19 miles of beaches daily, takes inventories of hatched nests, and documents hatchling disorientations; and

WHEREAS, in Miami-Dade County, high rates of sea turtle disorientation due to misdirected and artificial lighting have been documented; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (“FWC”) is responsible for various enforcement, coastal management, and research efforts relating to the conservation of sea turtles and their habitat; and

WHEREAS, this Board wishes to create a framework of guidelines, in accordance with the recommendations of FWC, to protect sea turtles by minimizing beachfront lighting,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA:

Section 1. Section 24-48.27 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, Florida, is hereby created to read as follows:

Sec. 24-48.27. Sea Turtle Nesting Protection.

(A) *Purpose and intent.* The purpose of this section is to create a framework of best-practice guidelines to reduce the impacts of artificial coastal lighting on threatened and endangered sea turtles that nest on the beaches of Miami-Dade County by mitigating artificial lighting and other activities that disorient turtle hatchlings, causing them to crawl toward land rather than toward the ocean. This section is intended to provide informational guidance to improve nesting habitat degraded by light pollution and increase successful nesting activity and production of hatchlings.

(B) *Definitions.*

The following terms and phrases when used in this article shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except when the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

(1) *Artificial light* means any point source of light emanating from a device made by humans, including but not limited to incandescent mercury vapor, metal halide, sodium lamps, fluorescent, flashlights, spotlights, streetlights, vehicular lights, construction

lights, security lights, flash photography, bonfires, or any light emanating from any reflective surface of the device.

- (2) *Beach* means that area of unconsolidated material that extends landward from the mean low-water line of the Atlantic Ocean, to the place where there is a marked change in material or physiographic form, or to the line of permanent vegetation.
- (3) *Commercial property* means real property that is open to the public and that is used for business, commercial, or for-profit purposes. It is prima facie evidence that a property is commercial if it (i) is located in a business, commercial, mixed-use commercial, office, apartment, hotel, or warehouse zoning district; (ii) contains commercial or business advertising visible from the right-of-way; or (iii) has posted on its premise a business occupational license.
- (4) *Cumulatively visible* means illuminated by numerous artificial light sources that as a group are directly or indirectly visible to an observer standing on any portion of the beach.
- (5) *Directly visible* means visibility of the glowing elements, lamps, globes, or reflectors of an artificial light source by an observer standing on the beach.
- (6) *Dune* means a mound or ridge of loose sediments, usually sand-sized, lying landward of the beach and deposited by any natural or artificial mechanism.
- (7) *F.A.C.* means the Florida Administrative Code.
- (8) *Filmed glass* means glass that has been covered with a film such that the material has a shading coefficient that meets or exceeds the requirements in F.A.C. Rule 62B-55.004, has adhesive as an integral part, and has performance claims that are supported by testing procedures and documentation.

- (9) *Floodlight* means a reflector-type light fixture that may be attached directly to a building, other structure, or free-standing, and is unshielded.
- (10) *Ground-level barrier* means any vegetation, natural feature, or artificial structure rising from the ground that prevents beachfront lighting from shining directly onto the beach-dune system.
- (11) *Hatchling* means any species of marine turtle, within or outside of a nest, which has recently hatched from an egg.
- (12) *Indirectly visible* means reflected light as a result of glowing elements, lamps, globes, or reflectors of an artificial light source which is visible to an observer standing anywhere on the beach without the light source being directly visible.
- (13) *Long wavelength light source* means light bulbs or diodes that produce light that measures greater than 560 nanometers and absent wavelengths below 560 nanometers on a spectroscope, which include low-pressure sodium vapor, true red neon, red, orange, or amber light-emitting diode (LED), or other lighting sources that produce light that measures greater than 560 nanometers and absent wavelengths below 560 nanometers.
- (14) *Marine turtle* means any marine-dwelling reptile of the families Cheloniidae or Dermochelyidae found in Florida waters or using the beach as a nesting habitat, including the species: *Caretta caretta* (loggerhead), *Chelonia mydas* (green), *Dermochelys coriacea* (leatherback), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (hawksbill), and *Lepidochelys kemp* (Kemp's ridley). For purposes of this section, marine turtle is synonymous with turtle or sea turtle.
- (15) *Minimized* means a combination of low-shielded-long light sources including fixtures being mounted as low as possible, using the lowest wattage necessary, completely downward directed and shielded, installing fewer fixtures, using a long wavelength light source, and using only if needed for safety.

- (16) *Nest* means an area where marine turtle eggs have been naturally deposited or subsequently relocated.
- (17) *Nesting season* means the period from March 1 through October 31 of each year.
- (18) *New development* means new construction and remodeling of existing structures when such remodeling includes alteration of exterior lighting and glass such as windows, railings, balconies, and doors.
- (19) *Nighttime* means the time period between sunset and sunrise.
- (20) *Person* means individuals, firms, associations, joint ventures, partnerships, estates, trusts, syndicates, fiduciaries, corporations, and all other groups or combinations.
- (21) *Pole lighting* means a light fixture set on a base or pole that raises the source of the light higher than forty-eight (48) inches off the ground.
- (22) *Rooftop advertising sign* means an outdoor advertising display that is mounted on the top of a building's roof.
- (23) *Solar screens* means screens that are fixed installations and permanently project shade over the entire area of glass. Solar screens are installed on the outside of the glass and have a shading coefficient that meets or exceeds the standards in the F.A.C. Rule 62B-55.004, as it may be amended, and have performance claims supported by approved testing procedures and documentation.
- (24) *Tinted glass* means any glass treated to achieve an industry-approved inside-to-outside light transmittal value that meets or exceeds the requirements in the F.A.C. Rule 62B-55.004, as it may be amended. Such transmittance is limited to the visible spectrum (400 to 700 nanometers) and is measured as the percentage of light that is transmitted through the glass.

- (C) Activities disruptive to marine turtles.
- (1) *Discouraged generally.* The following activities are discouraged on the beach at nighttime during the nesting season for the protection of nesting marine turtle females, nests, and hatchlings:
 - (a) The building of campfires or bonfires.
 - (b) Fireworks displays, except those that occur from offshore barges that have obtained a permit from the fire department with jurisdiction over the area and all required state permits and approvals.
 - (2) *Operation of motorized vehicles.* During nesting season, the operation of all motorized vehicles, except emergency and law enforcement vehicles, beach maintenance vehicles, concessionaire vehicles that have obtained all applicable permits, or those permitted on the beach for marine turtle conservation or research, is discouraged. Whenever feasible, authorized vehicles used on the beach at nighttime should have red or amber filters covering their headlights. Additionally, after sunrise, the operation of authorized motorized vehicles should wait until the Miami-Dade County Sea Turtle Conservation Program, or other sea turtle conservation program as determined by the Director of the Department of Environmental Resources Management or successor department, has conducted its morning sea turtle nesting survey.
 - (3) *Special events.* Any lighting associated with a special event during nesting season should not be visible from the beach after 9:00 p.m. Any authorized lighting should be low wattage, long wavelength light source, shielded, and directed away from the beach.
 - (4) *Disturbance of sea turtles, nests, or eggs.* No person should take, possess, disturb, mutilate, destroy, cause to be destroyed, sell, offer for sale, transfer, molest, or harass any sea turtle or its nest or eggs at any time, nor should any person attempt to engage in any such conduct.

- (5) *Lighting guidelines for new development.* New development on properties within line-of-sight of the beach is encouraged to comply with the following:
- (a) Exterior artificial light fixtures should be designed and positioned on structures so that the point source of light or its reflection on any reflective surface is not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach at nighttime during nesting season.
 - (b) Exterior artificial light fixtures should use true red or amber LED lighting wherever feasible.
 - (c) Exterior artificial light fixtures within direct line-of-sight of the beach should be completely shielded downlight only fixtures, or recessed fixtures having low wattage long wavelength light sources and non-reflective interior surfaces. Other fixtures that have appropriate shields, louvers, or cut-off features also should be used if consistent with subsection (C)(5)(a) of this section.
 - (d) Light fixtures should be mounted as low in elevation as possible through use of low-mounted wall fixtures, wall fixtures fitted with hoods, low bollards, step lights, path lights, paver lights, and ground-level fixtures, so that no light is directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach.
 - (e) Floodlights, upward-oriented lights, spotlights, and search lights for decorative or security purposes are discouraged if directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach.
 - (f) Exterior lights used expressly for safety or security purposes should be limited to the minimum number, minimum wattage, and configuration required to achieve the safety and security function in compliance with the provisions of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Motion detectors should be employed to keep lights

off except when approached, and such motion detectors should switch lights on for the minimum duration possible.

- (g) Pole lighting, if used, should be fitted with long wavelength light sources and should be shielded in such a manner that light will be contained primarily within the area that is landward of the pole, and light should not be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach.
- (h) Lights on balconies, including step lights, that serve as egress areas from building and on catwalks, and step lights within line-of-sight of the beach should be limited to low profile luminaries fitted with long wavelength light sources and positioned so that no light is directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach.
- (i) Tinted or filmed glass or solar screens should be installed on all glass windows, walls, balconies, elevator shafts, stairwells, railings, and doors of all structures facing or within line-of-sight of the beach. However, convenience stores shall comply with the security requirements set forth in section 8A-302 of this Code.
- (j) Parking areas and structures should be designed and located to prevent vehicular headlights from being directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach. Parking area and parking structure lighting should be shielded from the beach through the use of shields that direct light away from the beach, and ground-level barriers should be designed in conformance to the CPTED principles. Such ground-level barriers should not interfere with marine turtle nesting or hatchling emergence and should not cause short or long-term damage to the beach or dune system. Entrances and exits to parking structures should not face the ocean. Surfaces of parking areas should not contain ground glass or other reflective material.

- (k) Lighting provided for any outdoor recreational feature on or abutting the beach, including but not limited to tennis courts, pickleball courts, handball courts, volleyball courts, exercise equipment areas, and swimming pools, should utilize low mounted fixtures such as bollards and path lights, be long wavelength only light sources, and be shielded to prevent light from being directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach.
 - (l) Dune crosswalks, if lighted, should utilize low profile shielded luminaries fitted with long wavelength light sources and only be used landward of the crest of the dune.
 - (m) Rooftop advertising signs that are illuminated in any fashion are discouraged. All illuminated signage should be sited on the landward side of the structure to which it is affixed and mounted such that it is not within line of sight of the beach. Illuminated signage should use low wattage, long wavelength only light sources that are downward directed and fully shielded.
 - (n) Temporary security lights at construction sites should not be mounted more than 15 feet above the ground. Illumination from the lights should be the minimum necessary to assure security, should not spread beyond the boundary of the property being developed, should be directed away from the beach, and such lights should not be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach.
- (6) *Lighting guidelines for new development that has already been permitted.* Any structure for which a building permit has been issued prior to the effective date of this section is encouraged to adhere to the guidelines of subsection (C)(7) of this section.

- (7) *Exterior lighting guidelines for existing development.*
- (a) Within one year of the effective date of this section, the following measures are encouraged to be taken to reduce or eliminate the negative effects of existing exterior artificial lighting:
- i. Replace fixtures having an exposed light source with fixtures containing recessed light sources or shields;
 - ii. Replace non-directional fixtures with directional fixtures that point down and away from the beach;
 - iii. Replace fixtures having transparent or translucent coverings with fixtures having opaque shields covering an arc of at least 180 degrees and extending an appropriate distance below the bottom edge of the fixture on the seaward side so that the light source or any reflective surface is not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach;
 - iv. Replace pole lighting that is directly or indirectly visible from the beach with low-profile, low-level luminaries fitted with long wavelength light sources or add shielding so that the light source or any reflective surface is not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach;
 - v. Construct a ground level barrier to shield light sources from the beach. Ground-level barriers should not interfere with marine turtle nesting or hatchling emergence, or cause short- or long-term damage to the beach or dune system;

- vi. Permanently remove or permanently disable any fixture that cannot be brought into compliance with these guidelines;
- vii. Replace traditional light bulbs with low wattage, long wavelength light sources;
- viii. If low-level luminaries are not used, pole lighting should be fitted with long wavelength light sources and should be shielded in such a manner that light will be contained primarily within the area that is landward of the pole;
- ix. Replace incandescent, fluorescent, and high intensity lighting with the lowest wattage long wavelength light sources possible for the specific application;
- x. Plan or improve vegetation buffers between the light source and the beach to screen light from the beach;
- xi. Point or tilt directional light fixtures downward so that the point source of light or its reflection on any reflective surface is not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach.

(8) *Interior lighting guidelines for existing development.*

To reduce the negative effects of interior lighting visible from the beach, the following measures are encouraged for interior lighting of existing structures within line-of-sight of the beach:

- (a) Within one year of the effective date of this section, one or more of the following measures should be taken by hotels and other commercial properties to reduce or eliminate the negative effects of existing interior artificial light sources that are directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach:

- i. Apply window tint film that meets the light transmittance standards for tinted glass as defined herein, provided that convenience stores comply with the security requirements set forth in section 8A-302 of this Code;
 - ii. Rearrange lamps and other moveable fixtures away from windows;
 - iii. Use opaque shades or room darkening window treatments (e.g., blinds, curtains, screens) to shield interior light from the beach.
- (b) Residential properties, including single-family and multi-family residential properties, are encouraged to reduce, minimize, or eliminate the negative effects of existing interior artificial light sources visible from the beach at nighttime through the following measures:
 - i. Turn off or dim all unnecessary lights;
 - ii. Apply window tint film that meets the light transmittance standards for tinted glass as defined herein;
 - iii. Rearrange lamps and other moveable fixtures away from windows;
 - iv. Use opaque shades or room darkening window treatments (e.g., blinds, curtains, screens) to shield interior light from the beach.
- (9) *Signs.* Commercial signage facing the ocean or in the line-of-sight of the beach, except building identification signs, should not be illuminated between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. during nesting season. Building identification signs within line-of-sight of the beach should utilize low wattage, long wavelength light sources.

- (10) *Publicly owned lighting.* Streetlights, existing lighting at parks, publicly owned parking facilities, and publicly owned walkways are encouraged to adhere to the following guidelines, provided that parking illumination complies with the requirements set forth in sections 8A-302 and 8C-3 of this Code:
- (a) Streetlights. Streetlights installed after the effective date of this ordinance should either be located so that the bulk of illumination will travel away from the beach, and shielding is used to prevent light from being directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach, or should be low profile luminaries. Streetlights existing prior to the effective date of this ordinance should be equipped with shields that prevent light from being directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach.
 - (b) Lighting at parks, publicly owned parking facilities, and publicly owned walkways should be shielded or shaded during nighttime hours of nesting season so that such lighting is not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively visible from the beach. Such shielding or shading should not conflict with CPTED principles and should not cause safety hazards for pedestrians.

Section 2. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or provision of this ordinance is held invalid, the remainder of this ordinance shall not be affected by such invalidity.

Section 3. It is the intention of the Board of County Commissioners, and it is hereby ordained that the provisions of this ordinance, including any sunset provision, shall become and be made a part of the Code of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The sections of this ordinance may be renumbered or relettered to accomplish such intention, and the word "ordinance" may be changed to "section," "article," or other appropriate word.

Section 4. This ordinance shall become effective ten (10) days after the date of enactment unless vetoed by the Mayor, and if vetoed, shall become effective only upon an override by this Board.

PASSED AND ADOPTED:

Approved by County Attorney as
to form and legal sufficiency:



Prepared by:



Cristina M. Rabionet

Prime Sponsor: Commissioner Micky Steinberg
Co-Sponsors: Senator René García
Commissioner Vicki L. Lopez
Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado