

VIRGIN TOWN

Staff Report —Ordinance No. 2026-XX — Sign Lighting Amendments

To: Virgin Town Planning Commission / Town Council

From: Ryker Steglich, Town Planner, Sunrise Engineering

Date: October 1, 2026

Subject: Ordinance 2026-XX – Sign Lighting Amendments

AT A GLANCE

Application	Town initiated text amendment to the Virgin Municipal Code
Subject	Consolidation of all sign-illumination standards into Chapter 52; conforming amendments to Chapter 50 and Chapter 2.12 definitions
Prepared By	Ryker Steglich, Town Planner, Sunrise Engineering
Next Step	Planning Commission public hearing and possible recommendation; Town Council adoption

I. BACKGROUND

The Town regulates illumination of signs in two places in the Virgin Municipal Code (VMC). Chapter 52 (Sign Regulations) and Chapter 50 (Lighting) each contain provisions addressing how signs may be lighted. Because the two chapters were adopted separately, their sign-illumination provisions do not fully agree, and one contains an obsolete cross-reference.

Three specific problems have made the current code difficult to administer:

1. Conflicting permissions. VMC 16.52.6(D) state that no sign shall be internally lighted and directs sign lighting to the requirement of the former "VULU Section 8.40, Outdoor Lighting." VMC 16.50.10(F), by contrast, separately permits backlit signs and sets its own standards. A backlit sign is therefore arguable prohibited under one chapter and permitted under the other.
2. Obsolete cross-reference. The "Section 8.40" that VMC 16.52.6(D) points to was repealed and replaced by Chapter 50 when the current lighting ordinance was adopted. The reference no longer lead anywhere.

3. Undefined terms. The terms used to distinguish permitted from prohibited illumination (“internally illuminated”, “backlit”, “externally illuminated”) are inconsistently defined, which has required case-by-case interpretation of individual sign applications.

This ordinance resolves those problems by consolidating all sign-illumination standards into a single home in Chapter 52, correcting the obsolete reference, and clarifying the governing definitions. It does not expand what signs may be illuminated; internal illumination remains prohibited, as it is under the current code.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE

The ordinance makes four substantive changes, together with the standard repealer, severability, and effective-date provisions. In summary:

- Section 1 – Consolidated sign-illumination standards (VMC 16.52.6(D)). Restates the sign illumination subsection as the single, complete source of standards for lighting signs. Signs may be unlighted or externally lighted only; internal illumination is prohibited. The subsection sets standards for external lighting (aimed and shielded to the sign face, light source not directly visible, top-mounted and directed downward, stationary and constant), a 3000K color temperature limit, a brightness limit, a curfew, and the contents of the required sign lighting plan.
 - Brightness standard. The prior 100-nit luminance cap – which is difficult to verify at permit review – is replaced with a 3-lux above-ambient standard drawn from DarkSky International’s illuminated Signage guidance. It is measured by comparing the illuminance at the sign with the lighting on versus off, at a set distance based on sign area, using an ordinary illuminance meter. This is both reviewable on the submitted lighting plan and enforceable in the field.
 - Dark-sky protections preserved. Signs remain subject to the Chapter 50 light-zone lumen allowances (VMC 16.50.14) and the Town-wide 3,000K color-temperature standard, so consolidation does not weaken night-sky protection.
- Section 2 – Prohibited Signs cross-reference (VMC 16.52.5(D)). Adds a single sentence tying the existing prohibition on intensely lighted and exposed-source signs to the consolidated standards, so a reader landing on the prohibitions list is directed to the full illumination standards. No existing prohibition is changed.
- Section 3 – Conforming amendments to Chapter 50 (Lighting). Replaces the sign-standards subsection VMC 16.50.10(F) with a pointer providing that sign illumination is governed exclusively by Chapter 52, and removes “sign permit” from the list of applications that require a lighting plan under VMC 16.50.22(A), because the sign lighting-plan

requirements now live in Chapter 52. This keeps all sign-illumination standards in one chapter and prevents the two chapters from conflicting again.

- Section 4 – Definitions (VMC Title 16, Chapter 2.12). Clarifies three definitions so the line between permitted and prohibited illumination is unambiguous: “Illuminated Sign” (any lighted sign), “Internally Illuminated Sign” (light source inside the sign transmitting light through the face or letters – prohibited), and “Externally Illuminated Sign” (lit by a separate outside source – permitted). The prohibition itself remains in the regulatory sections, not in the definitions.

Net effect. Because internal illumination was already prohibited under the current code, the practical effect of this ordinance is to remove Chapter 50’s conflicting backlit-sign permission and tidy the resulting standards – a clarification and slight tightening, not a loosening. Sign illumination becomes governed in one place, with a brightness standard the Town can actually review and enforce.

III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposed amendment:

- Is consistent with the purposes of the Virgin Municipal Code and the Town’s General Plan goals of protecting rural character and the night sky;
- Resolves an internal conflict between Chapters 50 and 52 and removes an obsolete cross-reference, improving the clarity and administrability of the sign and lighting ordinances;
- Preserves the Town’s existing dark-sky protections, including the light-zone lumen allowances and the 3,000K color-temperature standard, and adds a brightness standard that can be verified at permit review and in the field; and
- Does not expand the types of sign illumination permitted in the Town.

Recommendation. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission hold a public hearing and forward a recommendation of approval of Ordinance 2026-XX to the Town Council.

VIRGIN TOWN
ORDINANCE NO. 2026-XX
SIGN LIGHTING AMENDMENTS



AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF VIRGIN, UTAH, AMENDING TITLE 16, CHAPTER 52, SIGN REGULATIONS, AND TITLE 16, CHAPTER 50, LIGHTING, TO CONSOLIDATE ALL STANDARDS FOR THE ILLUMINATION OF SIGNS WITHIN CHAPTER 52; AMENDING TITLE 16, CHAPTER 2.12 DEFINITIONS; AND RESOLVING A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SIGN AND LIGHTING ORDINANCES.

RECITALS

WHEREAS Virgin Town (“Town”) is a Utah municipal corporation and political subdivision of the State of Utah, organized and existing under the provisions of Utah Code Annotated Title 10.

WHEREAS pursuant to Utah Code Ann. 10-20-502 and 10-20-503 the Virgin Town Council (“Town Council”), acting in its capacity as the governing and legislative body of the Town, has enacted land use regulations found in Title 16 (Land Uses) of the Virgin Municipal Code (“VMC”), including Chapter 52 (Sign Regulations) and Chapter 50 (Lighting).

WHEREAS the Town adopted Chapter 52, Sign Regulations, by Ordinance 2025-06, and Chapter 50, Lighting, by Ordinance 2025-07, each of which contains provisions governing the illumination of signs.

WHEREAS VMC 16.52.6(D) provides that no sign shall be internally lighted and directs sign lighting to former “VULU Section 8.40, Outdoor Lighting,” which was repealed and replaced by Chapter 50, while VMC 16.50.10(F) separately permits backlit signs and establishes additional standards for sign illumination.

WHEREAS the existence of sign-illumination standards in two separate chapters, an obsolete cross-reference, and differing treatment of backlit signs between two chapters have created ambiguity and conflict in the administration of the VMC.

WHEREAS the Town Council finds it in the best interest of clarity, consistency, and effective administration to consolidate all standards governing the illumination of signs within Chapter 52, and to provide that Chapter 52 governs the illumination of signs while Chapter 50 governs all other outdoor lighting.

WHEREAS the Town Council finds that signs should remain subject to the dark-sky lumen allowances and color-temperature standards of Chapter 50, so that consolidation of these standards does not diminish protection of Virgin’s night sky, consistent with the Town’s proximity to Zion National Park and the certified Dark Sky communities of Springdale and Zion Canyon.

WHEREAS the Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on this ordinance on _____, 20____.

WHEREAS the Virgin Town Planning and Zoning Commission recommended in a ___ to ___ vote that the Town Council [*approve/deny*] these amendments on _____, 20__.

ORDINANCE

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Town Council of Virgin Town, Utah, as follows:

1. Amendment and restatement of Virgin Municipal Code 16.52.6(D), Subsection D (Illumination) of VMC 16.52.6 (Minimum Sign Standards) is hereby amended and restated as follows:

16.52.6

D. ILLUMINATION.

1. illumination methods. Signs shall be either unlighted or lighted externally. No sign shall be internally illuminated. Internally illuminated signs, as defined in VMC Title 16, Chapter 2.12, are prohibited.
2. Chapter 52 governs sign illumination. This subsection, together with the definitions in Title 16, Chapter 2.12, contains all standards governing the illumination of signs. Chapter 52 governs the illumination of signs, and Chapter 50, Lighting, governs all other outdoor lighting. Except as provided in subsection F below, the standards of Chapter 50 do not independently regulate sign illumination.
3. Standards for externally lighted signs. Lighting for externally lighted signs shall:
 - a. Be designed, aimed, and shielded so that light is directed only onto the sign face and does not trespass onto adjacent streets, roads, or properties or into the night sky;
 - b. Be placed so that the light source illuminates only the sign surface and is not directly visible from the public right-of-way, adjacent properties, or motor vehicle traffic;
 - c. Be mounted at the top of the sign, or within two (2) feet of the top of a building-mounted sign, and directed downward; and
 - d. Provide stationary and constant illumination. Sign lighting shall not blink, flash, undulate, or otherwise vary in intensity.
4. Color Temperature. All light sources used to illuminate a sign shall have a correlated color temperature equal to or less than three thousand degrees Kelvin (3,000°K).

Deleted: Signs may be unlighted or lighted externally. No sign shall be internally lighted. Light sources for externally lighted signs shall be placed to illuminate only the sign surface and shall not be visible beyond the premises. Special care shall be taken in the design of external sign lighting to ensure that the light source is not visible to neighboring properties or motor vehicle traffic. All sign lighting shall comply with the requirements in VULU Section 8.40, Outdoor Lighting.

5. Illumination Limit. The light level of an externally illuminated sign, measured as the increase in illuminance when the sign lighting is turned on compared to ambient conditions measured with the sign lighting turned off, shall not exceed three (3) lux. The measurement shall be taken with an illuminance meter within fifteen (15) degrees of perpendicular to the sign face, both horizontally and vertically, at a distance in feet equal to the square root of the sign area in square feet multiplied by one hundred (Measurement Distance (ft) = square root of [Area of Sign (sq. ft.) x 100]).
6. Dark-sky standards continue to apply. Notwithstanding subsection B above, sign illumination remains subject to the light-zone lumen allowances of VMC 16.50.14 and shall be included in the calculation of total lumens on the property.
7. Curfew. Sign illumination shall be turned off one (1) hour after sunset, or at the close of business, whichever is later, and shall remain off until one (1) hour prior to sunrise.
8. Lighting plan required. An application for a sign permit for any illuminated sign shall include a lighting plan demonstrating compliance with this subsection. The lighting plan shall include:
 - a. A drawing or elevation showing the location, height, and mounting of each proposed light fixture in relation to the sign;
 - b. Manufacturer's specifications or catalog cuts for each proposed fixture, showing the fixture type, lamp wattage, lumen output, correlated color temperature, and shielding;
 - c. A description of the aiming and shielding method by which light will be confined to the sign face; and
 - d. The total lumen output of the sign lighting, for inclusion in the property's total lumen calculation under VMC 16.50.14.

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2. Amendment of Virgin Municipal Code 16.52.5(D). Subsection D (Intensely Lighted Signs, Beacons and Searchlights) of VMC 16.52.5 (Prohibited Signs) is hereby amended and restated as follows:

16.52.5

D. Lighted beacons, searchlights, other lights or lighted devices which attract attention to a property are prohibited. Intensely lighted or exposed luminary sources such as exposed bulbs or tubes shall be prohibited. Exposed neon signs shall be prohibited except for those

allowed by this chapter. Internally illuminated signs are prohibited as provided in VMC 16.52.6(D).

3. Amendment of Virgin Municipal Code Chapter 50, Lighting. Chapter 50 of the VMC is hereby amended as follows, to remove standards governing the illumination of signs, which are consolidated into VMC 16.52.6(D) by this ordinance:

A. VMC 16.50.10(F) (Signs) is amended and restated as follows:

F. Signs: The illumination of signs is governed exclusively by VMC 16.52.6(D).

B. VMC 16.50.22(A) (Application and Review Procedures) is amended to remove sign permits from the applications requiring a lighting plan under this section, as the lighting plan requirements for signs are established in VMC 16.52.6(D). The introductory language of VMC 16.50.22 (A) is amended and restated as follows:

A. Lighting plans required: All the following applications: Conditional Use Permits (CUP), subdivision, building permit, and commercial site plan, shall include a lighting plan that shows evidence that the proposed lighting fixtures and light sources will comply with this Code and must include the following:

4. Amendment of Virgin Municipal Code Title 16, Chapter 2.12 (Definitions). The following definitions in VMC Title 16, Chapter 2.12 are hereby amended and restated as follows:

Illuminated Sign. Any sign that is lighted, whether from an internal or external light source. A sign that is not lighted is an unlighted sign.

Internally Illuminated Sign. A sign that is lighted by a light source located inside the sign, such that light is transmitted through the sign face, letters, or other elements. This includes internally lighted cabinet or panel signs and signs with letters lighted from within.

Externally Illuminated Sign. A sign illuminated only by a light source separate from and outside the sign, directed onto the sign face, such that the light source is not visible beyond the premises. An indirectly illuminated sign is a form of externally illuminated sign.

5. Repealer. All Virgin Town ordinances or resolutions or parts thereof, which are in conflict herewith, are hereby repealed.
6. Severability. Should any part or provision of this Ordinance be declared by the courts to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the Ordinance as a whole or any part thereof other than the part so declared to be unconstitutional or invalid.
7. Effective date. This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption and posting as required by law.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE VIRGIN TOWN COUNCIL on _____, 2026.

By: _____
Jean Krause, Mayor

Deleted: Signs may be unlighted, lighted externally, or backlit. All sign lighting must be designed, directed, and shielded in such a manner that the light source is not visible beyond the property boundaries where the sign is located. Lighting for signs must be directed such that only the sign face is illuminated. All lighted signs must have stationary and constant lighting, and comply with curfews described in section F.6 below. ¶
Standards for externally illuminated signs: ¶
Lighting for externally illuminated signs must be aimed and shielded so that light is directed only onto the sign face and does not trespass onto adjacent streets, roads or properties or into the night sky. ¶
Lighting for externally illuminated signs must be mounted at the top of the sign (or within two feet of the top of a building mounted sign). ¶
Standards for backlit signs: ¶
Backlit signs shall be designed such that the light source is not visible. ¶
Backlit signs shall be designed such that harsh, direct illumination does not emanate out of the sign. Rather, the backlighting shall only allow indirect illumination to emanate from the sign. For example, signs that create a "halo" effect around sign text are allowed. ¶
Backlit signs shall use low lumen light sources. ¶
Light color temperature standard: All light sources used to illuminate signage must have color temperature equal to or less than 3,000 degrees Kelvin (3,000°K). ¶
Luminance level standard: No sign shall have an illuminance level greater than 100 nits (100 candelas per square meter). ¶
Sign illumination curfew: Sign illumination shall be turned off one hour after sunset, or the close of the business, whichever is later. Sign illumination shall remain off until one hour prior to sunrise. ¶

Deleted: sign permit,

Deleted: Any sign which is lighted from within or without.

Deleted: Lighted

Deleted: A sign that is illuminated by a concealed light source within the sign that project light through the sign face. ¶

Attest: _____
Krystal Percival, Town Clerk/Recorder

Vote	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Jean Krause, Mayor	☐	☐	☐
Paul Luwe, Council Member	☐	☐	☐
Valerie Wenz, Council Member	☐	☐	☐
April Mckeon, Council Member	☐	☐	☐
Jim Kietzman, Council Member	☐	☐	☐

RECORDED this _____ day of _____ 2026
PUBLISHED or POSTED this _____ day of _____ 2026.
CERTIFICATE OF PASSAGE AND PUBLICATION OR POSTING

In accordance with Utah Code Annotated §63G-30-102 as amended, I, the Town Clerk/Recorder of Virgin, Utah, hereby certifies that the foregoing Ordinance was duly passed and published or posted via Class A Notice at:

- 1) Utah Public Notice website
- 2) Virgin Town website, www.virgin.utah.gov
- 3) Virgin Town Hall

Krystal Percival, Town Clerk/Recorder
Virgin Town, Utah