

Hilton Head Island Public Facilities Presentation
Dove Street Park
January 5, 2010
Part I

Thank you again for your time. Many, if not all of you, are familiar with The Dove Street Festival of Lights, but let me retell the story.

When my wife Cathy suggested that I put white lights and red bows on the southern magnolia tree in our front yard as a memorable experience for our only child's first Christmas in 1990, we could never have imagined what would come of holiday lights on our street.

Paul helped me to reposition my ladder so I didn't fall. We determined how to use step ladders and extended poles to drape our lights from the highest magnolia branches we could reach. We noticed that we could swag lights in the Oaks above. And of course we wrapped the trunks and many branches. One neighbor, directly across the street, already had lights on their house. They were delighted to put up more in the trees and their azaleas in their front yard. Other neighbors were excited to do the same thing. So, that handful of local residents created a holiday display with some unique characteristics that to our surprise drew more and more people. It came to be so much larger than ourselves, we became stewards of this community event.

We began to greet the people in the street as they drove by. We met folks from every neighborhood, and of course, Bluffton and its environs. We met people from every walk of life, some of whom we knew. Our friends and associates, of course, continued to return year after year. But we met so many others. Over these years, there were many tens of thousands. I'm sure that we've met people from every state in this country and from so many countries all around the world. Obviously more and more of the visitors to Hilton Head, the destination, have come to experience the Dove Street Lights.

When in the early years, people offered us money toward our electric bills we were surprised. We suggested they donate to a charity. When asked what charity, we told them about the Deep Well. We built a well on our street and collected donations of food, gifts, and money for several years. We needed to find a better way to manage the collections and to assure that some people did not feel obligated. Paul led the work with Deep Well partnering with Coligny Plaza to set up The Well with volunteers and established an entertainment schedule. Coligny Plaza's lights began to shine brighter and more colorfully.

The Program for Exceptional People came to help put up the displays, as did the Serteen group. Now college age, young adults, they continue to come even four years later, to help put up and take down. Members from The National Honor Society from Hilton Head high school have come to assist and work hard. Sunbelt rentals, of course, has donated the power lift to us for the last eight or more years. Anderson interactive has donated our website, allowing us to update and add content and pictures. And so many members of Deep Well and Coligny Plaza and others in the community who have

donated their time and efforts in a variety of ways to support this experience, it has been phenomenal.

We had wondered: "What was so different about our Holiday lights?". Many other neighborhoods have wonderful light displays, and you drive by look at one side and then you look at the other. On our short section of street, you become immersed in the display. There is a canopy of shimmering sparkling lights. During the 4 to 6 weeks of the Holiday season, our street truly becomes Dove Street Park. Families come by with their children wide eyed at all the lights and the beach snow, our bubbles. People continue to bring their extended family, parents and other relatives and tell many others to come by. Others walk over or ride their bikes. Many park their cars and linger, take pictures, talk to one another and to the residents. We began having spontaneous caroling or other performances. There were those that were planned from churches and schools. We had an Elvis impersonator and the 75 member all male Glee Club from Miami University of Ohio. Just this Christmas Eve, eight or more cast members of My Fair Lady came caroling for over an hour on our street. And of course we've always had Santa Claus and then Frosty the Snowman and even "snow angels".

Most people smile and shout comments of appreciation, thanking us. It's almost embarrassing. But it's truly a positive experience for so many. I've met young adults who have grown up always coming to Dove Street. I was told by one he thought it was the North Pole. So many people mention they've never experienced anything like this, except at Disney. But this is better. People who have been to many towns and villages with incredible holiday displays commend this experience as truly special. We have raised Dove Street Lights, and it now moves toward a larger future. This spontaneous community event has been special to so many. Next year will be our 20th year, and we expect to make it a grand finale. Our hopes are that together with the town and other service organizations and many charities, we can re-create The Dove Street Festival of Lights experience on a grander scale. We hope it will be put together by many more hands, minds and hearts on that wonderful tract of land bordered by North Forest Beach Drive and Park Road. We wish it to remain a passive park, with the annual holiday Festival of Lights event. We would like it to be called Dove Street Park.

With that said, I would like you to see a special video presentation put together by our good friend and supporter, Ben Ham. I think you will find it representative of all that we say and do. Roll it Paul!

Part II

I would like to share a few eyeball estimates and statistics with you regarding the Dove Street Festival of Lights.

Contributions to the Deep Well Project in cash & checks: 2009 - \$ 12,000+,
To date \$ 50,000 to 70,000

Contributions to the Deep Well Project in toys: To date 3,000

Contributions to the Deep Well Project in canned goods: To date 20,000

Approximate percentage of non-islanders visiting Dove Street during the Festival: 20%

Number of cars passing through our tiny street mostly in a 3 hour period on December 24, 2005: 1,418

Number of picture postcards like the one I am holding given to passersby on the street: 14,000

Rank out of 2,580,000 results when entering the words Dove Street in the Google search engine: #1

Number of individuals, businesses, and organizations donating goods and services to make this happen: too many to count

Value of an asset such as this to our community: priceless and, by the way, not dependent on the whims of any telecom sponsor!

As we will be celebrating our 20th year of lights on Dove St during the winter of 2010, we would like to transition this project afterword to an entity larger than ourselves. This will enable the tradition to sustain itself in the years to come without an enormous use of personal resources. Up until now, a handful of residents have maintained a light display which illuminates not only our residences but also those of many absentee owners and others who choose to have us decorate for them.

Therefore, we propose that a committee be established to explore the possibility of creating:

Dove Street Park

on a tract of land currently owned by the town of HHI between Egret St. and Heron St. in North Forest Beach.

We would request that a small, one way dirt road be placed within the park to allow vehicles, such as retirement home busses with seniors, to enjoy the light displays. This road would also support bucket trucks and/or other vehicles that might be used to create the displays. We envision a pathway connector between this road and the existing bike path that squirrels through the property enabling a drop off of passengers who can enjoy walking the pathways and meet up with their vehicle at the end of the route. An entertainment area which could host school choirs, church choirs, or other performers could be situated next to another area where donation of presents, canned goods, and money can take place. These donations could be divided up among participating charities.

This passive park should require minimal construction. Electrical connections would need to be established, unnecessary underbrush removed, a dirt road created. We would

not like to see parking areas or park benches. This would be consistent with our current venue on Dove Street.

The park would need to be maintained by a non profit organization which would be responsible for staffing the park with volunteers during this festival period and for setting up and maintaining the light displays.

The displays would need to be consistent with those currently on Dove Street and should have a professional feel to them. Emphasis on LED lighting would be a plus. Bubble machines and/or other snow simulators should be considered. Balloon figures and large, prefabricated displays would be excluded. The park's natural beauty would be emphasized exclusively through light displays featuring animals, trees, birds, and other flora / fauna.

We also propose

Gateway to Dove Street Park

a display which will emphasize the wonderful work that has been done at Coligny Beach Park. Several buildings there would be decorated in addition to trees and shrubs. Perhaps color filters could be used with the fountains as well.

We would like to emphasize that we wish that the Dove Street Park and Gateway to the Park be consistent with the vision that we have created over the last 20 years in order that we may give it our whole-hearted support.

We are hoping it will continue to warm the hearts and brighten the spirits of those who choose to walk or drive by for many, many years to come.

Don't let Dove Street get dark again after 2010!

As I said in the video and often to folks coming down our street, "It is a wonderful light".

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today.