

YOUR VIEW

Civility is fraying at Edisto Beach

Dear Editor:

The Town of Edisto Beach is known across South Carolina and nationally as a quiet, family-oriented town which has escaped the over-commercialization you find in so many coastal resorts. Generations of South Carolinians have come to relax and renew their family connections.

Generally, the town has operated in a friendly, cooperative way. In recent times, the civility has frayed.

One flashpoint has been the purchase of the Bell Buoy Seafood property to create a town park, where visitors could fish or crab, or where local citizens could have a venue to sell art or crafts. It was part of the vision that Edisto Beach's history and connection to the seafood industry could be interpreted here. It would be a low-impact, peaceful place where people could enjoy Big Bay Creek.

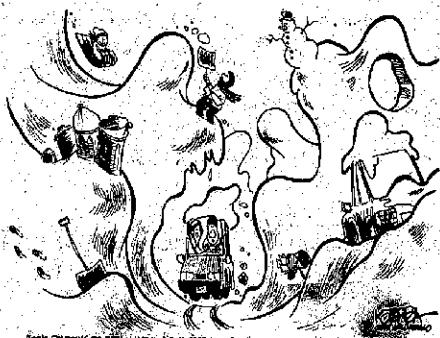
One person has come to symbolize this park: Mrs. Cheryl VanMetre. She has served as volunteer chairperson of the committee formed by the town for the past three years. She has received no pay, endured much stress and worked diligently to respect and reflect the desires of the town residents.

She has now been shown the door by new town council, with no thanks or respect. An effort by Mayor Lyons and Councilmember Anderson to at least allow her to continue to serve on the committee has failed. We fear this is the beginning of changes in the Town of Edisto Beach that will see this park sold for development, zoning protections weakened or eliminated, and see Edisto Beach lost as we have lost so much of our unique South Carolina culture. This should concern all South Carolinians, as the park was purchased with \$2 million of funding from the South Carolina Conservation Bank.

It is time for all friends of Edisto Beach to speak out and say, "Stop!"

We can only hope it is not too late.

E.M. Skidmore
Edisto Island



IT'S STARTING TO FEEL LIKE WE'VE SLIPPED INTO SOME WEIRD, PARALLEL UNIVERSE

What happens now at Bell Bouy Park?

Dear Editor:

We are dismayed to hear of the restructuring of the Bell Bouy Park Committee. Considering the success town council has had with Cheryl Van Metre as chair, we are confused by its decision to change something that is working very well. Cheryl has volunteered for one and a half years as a very effective chair of the committee. She brought together many differing points of view, polled the citizens carefully about what was wanted and needed for a successful public park, and in general kept a lively discussion and positive feeling going for this last piece of green space on the water. We are also concerned that council has asked Archie Johnston to leave the committee. Archie has a long association with this community and is in touch with what the people want from this park.

I was present at the town meeting on Feb. 11, and found it

nothing less than shameful the way that body treated Cheryl. This could have been handled in such a more sensible and kind manner. Voting her off the committee, squabbling over what the rules really were about keeping committee members on board, refusing to grant Mayor Lyons' honorable request to step down and let Cheryl stay on, and all of this in the public meeting with Cheryl present. It really did seem that council was making up the rules as it went along. Inventing a reason to get rid of this leader in our community. We cannot help but think that it has a hidden agenda for asking Cheryl to step down.

Now that council has made this egregious move, we want to know what it plans to do to further the progress of the park that we, the citizens, the taxpayers, voted to pay for and to create.

Will it continue to pursue the master plan and open the park to us as soon as possible?

Is it applying for grants to continue the preparations of the park for the public?

The park is one of the few open spaces on Edisto, and we want to see it become a hub, a meeting place for families and friends, for educational, recreational, cultural and community involvements.

The park is vital to our quality of life on Edisto.

We would appreciate answers to our questions, and we are willing to help in any way we can.

Sincerely and with concern,
Henry and Virginia
Woodhead
Edisto Beach