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Sent: Monday, August 3, 2015 2:24 PM
To: Rick Biagi <RBiagi@nealmcdevitt.com>
Cc: jnichols@unboundtechnology.com; eric@heycars.com; gail.haller@ParkRidgeChamber.org
Subject: RE: Holiday Lights

Hi Rick,

Thanks for your email about the Holiday Lights. It's great to hear that you want to step up and lead a group to obtain funding for the Holiday Lights. I just wanted to clarify a couple of points...

The Holiday Lights Coalition was originally started by a few well-meaning citizens like yourself, many of whom were connected to Indian Scouts and other local groups. It was only a year or two later that these volunteers asked the Chamber for pretty much exactly what you're asking--to hold the money. At the time, the Chamber board voted to help them out, despite a few board members predicting the eventual outcome that the chamber would end up taking the blame when the volunteers lost steam. Despite the fact that lighting the town was never really a chamber project, it eventually has become a PR nightmare for the Chamber, with public officials literally claiming (in public) that it would be the Chamber's fault if Park Ridge goes dark.

Although we do appreciate and support your efforts, the Chamber is not in a position to take on this project. Holding and processing funds at that level would represent approximately 20% of our entire annual budget, for a project that in all nearby communities is a municipal endeavor.

One of the phrases we've heard about the lights are that they are "the flowers of winter," with the implication that if the city plants flowers in the summer, perhaps they should consider the winter lights in the same way. Certainly a beautiful sentiment. If the Chamber steps in to manage the project--even with public donations--what's to stop the city from ceasing landscaping in retail areas? And if they do, will we be forced to hear yet again how only retailers benefit from said landscaping, and so the Chamber must pick up that responsibility too? Ignoring all political arguments surrounding privatization, it shouldn't be done under duress.

As a result, a more appropriate form of support from the Chamber would be to help get the word out to our members that an independent group was taking over the process, so that our members could voluntarily support the effort as they see fit. Historically, it has only been the Uptown and South Park business districts that were lit, and believe it or not, those areas don't hold even a majority of the Chamber's membership.

So unfortunately, we cannot receive and hold the funds collected by your committee as only monies related to Chamber activities can be held in accounts in the name of the Chamber. However, if you're able to get a project going we will support you in whatever ways we can.

We wish you Good Luck.

Jo Ann Flynn
President, Board of Directors
Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce

Joshua Nichols
Past President, Board of Directors
Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce

Eric Nelson
President-Elect, Board of Directors
Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce