

Carousel from A1

in which his leadership came under question led to his decision to distance himself from the project.

"The board does not need me anymore ... and I wouldn't walk away if I didn't feel [the project] was secure," he said. "The project is dear to my heart, but it will carry on without me."

Since Williams' departure, vice president Alice Nowicki has assumed the presidency role.

"We are so sad to see Don leave us because he is so good at promotions and the networking that he does," Nowicki said. "Everybody was quite saddened by that. ... It was with great regret that we accepted his resignation."

"Echoing Williams' sentiment, Nowicki said she was confident the project will move forward as planned.

"We are right now reconstructing the board, making some changes, doing some goal-setting and we're starting again with new energy," she said.

Board member and project

engineer Russ McGuire, who has spent the past three years restoring the carousel, expressed confidence that work could continue smoothly.

"We're going to continue right on as we were before," he said. "There'll be no changes except that we have a new president at the moment. ... We will miss Don and we will keep him informed on what we're doing so that he can stay in the loop, but we're going to continue right along with the programs that he started."

The board also received a resignation letter from board member Linda Sexton, who had been on the board for four years and aided the nonprofit with land acquisition research.

Sexton said her accounting degree and 20 years of managing inventory for her family business were strengths she hoped to offer the board, however she was met with resistance in her attempts to increase transparency and accuracy.

In her letter of resignation, Sexton cited the board's inadequate treasurer reports, lack of merchandise inventory maintenance and

lack of board support for Sexton's fundraisers as reasons for quitting.

Sexton expressed concern that previous financial reports were simply checking account balances and lacked necessary details. She also noted that an accurate accounting between donated money spent purchasing items and inventory items on hand was lacking. Raising these points to board officers, she said, were not fruitful.

Nowicki agreed that there is room for improvement in some of the nonprofit's operations, but contended that the board's handling of finances has not been as haphazard as alleged.

"Those things she brought up in her resignation letter have been and are continuing to be addressed. They're valid points and it's something that, as a board grows, is a learning curve," said Nowicki, however stating, "The records have been kept very, very carefully and they're there. [The board] is always open to whoever wants to talk to us about it."

Nowicki also stressed that transparency was a feature of the board's operations.

"We are transparent and we are on top of our finances and we're very careful with our donation and sponsorship monies," she said. "If anyone has inquiries or questions, I have an open-door policy and they can contact me by phone or email."

Future of the Carousel

Despite disagreements among those involved, there is a consensus that the carousel project will survive the shift.

"The general feeling is that we are moving forward and we are going to continue on with the project to the end like we signed on for," said Nowicki. "Every board has hiccups and things that need to be changed and hopefully this will be the only one that we have."

"When you work on a project like this, you really all become one big, rowdy family and disagreements happen."

Williams also encouraged the community to help maintain the momentum behind the project.

"The point I really want to drive home is continued support of the carousel by

the citizens," he said. "It needs support of the community."

In the meantime, the board is soliciting applications from the community to fill board positions and recruit volunteers to help with various operations.

"As we grow, we have more need for volunteers to help us with fundraising and independent projects," said Nowicki. "Restoration is almost done, but we have other things that are going to come up as we are waiting for land acquisition."

The nonprofit ultimately hopes to establish the carousel on a plot of land with structures which will protect the carousel and provide space for other operations that will make the project self-sustaining.

More short-term, however, the board is working with King Estate Winery and the City of Cottage Grove to be granted a variance, which will allow the carousel to deviate from the zoning requirements of its industrial location and operate the carousel in the warehouse.

A solid timeline has yet to be established.

"I would suspect with-

in the next couple months we'll get city approval for that," said McGuire. "And if we can operate the carousel for the public for two years, then we will be owners."

Under an agreement with the Cash family, the current owners of the carousel, two years of operation must be completed before a transfer of ownership to the Friends of the Cottage Grove Carousel takes place.

"The project will get done. I'm sure it will," said Sexton reflecting on the situation. "I'm proud of what I accomplished there and I'm still looking forward to seeing my grandkids on it."

Looking forward, Nowicki was optimistic the project will meet its goals.

"The most important thing is that we're not going anywhere and we're continuing on," said Nowicki. "And we've got some great opportunities that are coming up that, as they develop, we'll be making announcements about."

For inquiries, Nowicki said she can be reached at 541-942-6148 or by email at alicenowicki@yahoo.com.

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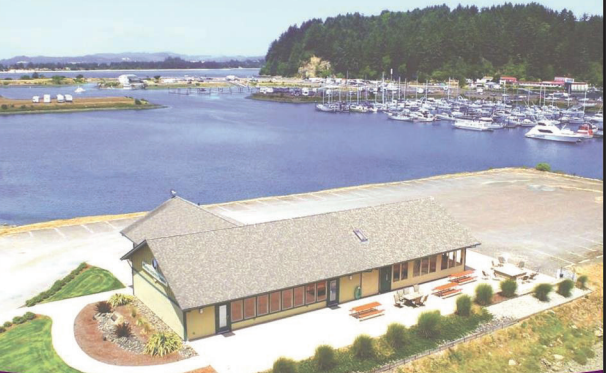
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