

Carousel not a bad idea

Contributed by WHVoice
Thursday, 18 September 2008

A caller this week pooh-poohed the idea of a carousel – maybe even THE carousel – coming to West Haven's Savin Rock Conference Center. He thought it costly and unnecessary. Costly? Maybe. Unnecessary? Possibly. But, what's wrong with bringing one into the city? We can't think of a reason that speaks against the idea.

The West Haven Carousel Committee was formed three years ago with the expressed purpose of bringing back the famous Beach Street “Merry-Go-Round.” Magic Mountain, which purchased the antique when the city amusement park was closed in 1966, may close down itself. There were hints it wouldn't be averse to the idea of selling the ride. Since then, the signals have been mixed. Is the park closing? Is the ride for sale? No one is quite sure. What is sure is the committee would like to bring a 19th century-style carousel into the city as an attraction and as a nod to our history as a resort community. It's been rough going. The project could cost upwards of \$3 million. Money has not been easy to come by with only a few thousand dollars in the till. That changed last week as the city decided to get on board with the project. Mayor Picard and Michael Mercuriano are joining forces for the project. All the money sought will come from grants, private and public, and it is hoped a war chest can be collected to make the project a reality. In other words, the city and committee are joining forces to go after primarily private funding for the project at no cost to the taxpayers. If they can't get the original carousel, the plan is to go for something like it. That goes back to our original questions. Is the project costly? In a world where \$1 million has been devalued, \$3 million is considerable, but not impossible. There are groups that specifically support such projects because they help improve the atmosphere of a community. Our history is influenced by the fact for more than a century it was a playground for the region; first the well off in the original hotels built at Savin Rock; and then later as an amusement area that catered to the working classes. It is a history that in many ways should be preserved for future generations. That leads to the question of whether the plan is necessary. From a strictly pragmatic point of view anything that does not have a practical application is unnecessary. That philosophy, however, does not allow for projects or plans that just help make a community a better place. The re-introduction of the “flying horses” to the community can only enhance the shore and its allure. There is something invigorating about a carousel, particularly the organ music and the smiling faces. The music harkens back to a simpler time, while the smiling faces are from those with simple innocence. There is something cathartic about that. In a world that is too often concerned with the practical, the pragmatic and the functional, we see no good reason to nix the idea of bringing (we hope) THE carousel back to West Haven. Is it costly? Yes. Is it necessary? No. Done correctly, these two concerns should not stop the committee and the city from moving forward.