

Farmers market director resigns

Farmers Market

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Peck Street fills with shoppers during the Watsonville Farmers Market Friday afternoon.

Move comes as event undergoes dramatic changes

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WATSONVILLE — In the midst of efforts to dramatically increase the number of shoppers and vendors at the downtown farmers market, its director has submitted her resignation.

Lea Goodman will step down Sept. 1. Goodman could not be reached for comment this morning. She is leaving to take advantage of other interests, said market board member Manny Rodrigues.

"She told me she pursued a job with a San Jose firm and was coordinating events for them and the money was too good to refuse," Rodrigues said. "She did an excellent job with the market from where she picked it up."

Rodrigues added that he and Goodman did not always see eye to eye on issues surrounding the market. For example, he said, Goodman resented the board's decision to hire consultant Vance Corum to beef up the weekly event.

"We had given Lea the opportunity for two and half years to apply her ideas and she personally did not meet my expectations," Rodrigues said. "Her line of thinking was kind of to maintain things as they were. Vance said he saw the potential for a much larger draw."

Rodrigues also said he and Goodman differed on whether the market should remain a certified organic market.

"She and I had some run-ins on that," Rodrigues said. "I think you have to be realistic — we're in an

agricultural area with fruit stands all over. As in any business, you need to adapt. The person we're going to look at to replace her is the person who wants to make sure it grows instead of maintaining or keeping it at the level it was. Lea was managing three other markets. I think she just maybe didn't have time for that. I'll miss her. She was a friend and still is a friend. She's a real nice lady."

Board member Judy Doering-Nielsen said Corum generated a lot of ideas to expand the market but was only employed for a brief period, which meant someone else would have to implement those ideas with limited funds.

She also said she doesn't believe the market has to remain a

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certified organic market, but rather should feature local produce regardless of how it is grown. She also said the newly expanded board — which was expanded at the suggestion of Corum — has not yet taken a position on the issue.

"The main consensus is everybody would like to see it be success-

ful," Doering-Nielsen said. "Having more vendors and a bigger variety has been tremendous help. The more vendors you can bring in creates more excitement."

Nancy Gammons from Four Sisters Farms has agreed to step in as interim manager until a formal hiring process is initiated. Gammons has been a vendor at the farmers market for several years and had actively participated on the boards of other markets.