

End Cafe's backers exert pier pressure

Group aims to help city
in reconstruction efforts

By Louise Woo
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Three former managers of the End Cafe have formed a citizens group to help the city of Huntington Beach shore up plans for the reconstruction of its beloved — but battered — pier.

The volunteer group, called PIER (Persons Interested in Expediting Reconstruction), was formed in the aftermath of the pier's Jan. 24 "memorial service," said PIER co-founder Tammy Dillon. She said about 400 people turned out to pay respects to the pier, which lost 300 feet as well as the End Cafe in a recent vicious winter storm.

"We had a procession to the end of the pier and put wish notes in balloons and let them go," said Dillon, 24. "It was a bonding experience, so we bonded this group."

The group, headed by Dillon, Julie Kotsch and Tom Bagshaw, aims to "facilitate the reconstruction" by helping the city do fund raising and publicity.

"It's a big project and will be very expensive, so we plan to help them out," Kotsch said. The first order of business will be to design a logo and make T-shirts and bumper stickers for sale. Then, Kotsch said, they hope to form a non-profit corporation and recruit celebrities for the fund-raising campaign.

Assistant City Administrator Rich Barnard said the preliminary estimate for the reconstruction is about \$4 million to \$5 million. An engineering report commissioned by the city will give officials a better estimate in a few months, and the city will seek funds from government sources.

Barnard said he was happy to hear that citizens are getting involved in the effort.

The 1983 reconstruction of the pier cost \$1.2 million and took almost 2½ years to complete, Barnard said. The End Cafe, owned by John Gustafson, was destroyed and had to be rebuilt after that storm, too.

"The PIER group would like to see the reconstruction completed faster — by this fall, if possible," Kotsch said.

"I've been working (at the End Cafe) on and off for 10 years," said Kotsch, 25. "This is home for me. ... I want to see (the city) get on it right away. When and if we do get our End Cafe again, we probably won't be there, but we want to make sure John (Gustafson) gets it. He's been like a father figure to us."

Gustafson said he is touched by the efforts of his former employees and is enthusiastic about getting a new restaurant built as soon as possible, even though it was destroyed by a storm once before.

"My feeling is that Huntington Beach needs a long pier and it needs a destination at the end of the pier," said Gustafson, 58.

The PIER group will hold its next meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday at Huntington Beach City Hall, Room B-8. The group will be taking suggestions and forming committees.

For more information, call Kotsch at 536-9326, weekdays from 3 to 5 p.m.

