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News

BDDC head 'hopes' executive sessions are at end

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By Steve Collins
Staff Writer

BRISTOL — After three months of closed-door negotiations and long executive sessions to hash out a proposed deal for downtown's revitalization, the Bristol Downtown Development Corp. hopes to be done with secrecy.

Frank Johnson, who heads the nonprofit entity, said he hopes his group has held its last executive session.

Though the 27-page agreement between the city, the BDDC and Long Island-based Renaissance Downtowns doesn't explicitly guarantee a more open process, Johnson said he considers the many studies and reports required by the deal will become public information.

City councilors plan to vote on the proposal Monday after a public hearing.

The agreement lays out a timetable for Renaissance to complete work on a wide variety of studies, from environmental work to plans for housing.

Johnson said during the talks with Renaissance, he questioned some of the provisions because it seemed to him the city was forcing the developer "to turn over work product that he paid for and put it essentially into the public domain."

But Don Monti, president of Renaissance, told him he didn't mind.

The agreement spells out specifically that "tracings, drawings, estimates, plans, specifications, investigations, studies and other documents and intellectual property, completed or partially completed, shall be the property of the city, to be used as city desires without restriction on future use by the city."

The agreement also requires the developer to give up any copyright or other intellectual property rights and to make sure the firms it deals with agree to the same terms.

What that means, city officials said, is that the material developed by Renaissance and turned over to Bristol will be public information available to anyone, including other developers, should something go wrong

between Monti and the city.

Johnson said he envisions Monti reporting to the BDDC monthly, including updating the agency on any studies that are underway or finished.

Johnson said he doesn't foresee any problems with sharing information with the public.

He said Monti "has been very forthcoming with the BDDC" and with The Bristol Press.

"I would hope that now everything will flow in a positive way," Johnson said. "It is my hope that coordination and cooperation among city officials, city staff, BDDC members and staff and the public will be the order of the day going forward."

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