

# The Bristol Press

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News

## Downtown contract said close

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By Jackie Majerus  
Staff Writer

BRISTOL — A contract between the city, the Bristol Downtown Development Corp. and Long Island developer Renaissance Downtowns is close at hand, negotiators said.

BDDC board member Jennifer Janelle, who is negotiating on behalf of the BDDC, said she's "cautiously optimistic" that the few remaining issues will be resolved and that the parties will reach an agreement before they reach a 120-day deadline later this month.

"It has been a lengthy negotiation during which I believe all parties have worked diligently to come to terms on an agreement that protects the city's interests while at the same time providing the necessary tools and incentives for the development of a vibrant, productive downtown," said Janelle.

Mayor Art Ward, too, said he is "cautiously optimistic" about the talks.

"Everyone's working toward a successful resolution," said Ward.

Don Monti, president of Renaissance, said Tuesday the negotiations with the BDDC and the city have been professional.

"It's been an extremely positive experience," said Monti, but he said, "This has been about as thorough a process as I've been through."

Ward said he believes the parties will finish on time.

"I know they're working fervently to meet that deadline," said Ward.

Attorney Tim Furey, who is representing Renaissance, said everyone involved is "rowing their oars in the same direction" for the good of the project and downtown.

"I'm actually very, very excited about the prospects once we have the agreement signed," said Monti. "It's a downtown with so much potential. Exciting days are coming."

If approved by all parties, the deal would make Renaissance the city's preferred developer for the 17-acre, municipally owned, former mall property in the heart of downtown. The company now has temporary status.

"We've had very productive meetings with the city parties," said Furey. "It's been a very collaborative process."

Frank Johnson, who chairs the BDDC and has been part of the negotiations, was reluctant to discuss them until the deal is finished, but said he expects his board to approve a contract next week.

"From the BDDC's point of view, we're just about ready for action," said Johnson. "We picked them as the tentative preferred developer, pending the outcome of the negotiating agreement."

Once the BDDC gives the deal the green light, the contract goes to city councilors for their approval and then Renaissance begins its planning process and marketing studies, said Johnson.

"That will be done in concert with the BDDC," said Johnson.

If the deal moves ahead as expected, it could prove transformative for downtown Bristol, which has been struggling for years with a dying, then dead, mall and now a vacant lot.

The agreement will include stipulations for how the land would be acquired, said Johnson, as well as a lot of timetables for progress that the developer will have to meet.

With so many lawyers, Furey said, the process isn't speedy, but it's been interesting to develop the process together.

"There's a lot of decision makers in the mix," said Furey.

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