

The Bristol Press

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News

Done deal for downtown

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BRISTOL — With congratulations all around, city leaders and the owner of Renaissance Downtowns Tuesday formally closed a deal that promises to create a new city center.

It's time, said Chairman Frank Johnson of the Bristol Downtown Development Corp., to "stop talking about what used to be in downtown Bristol and start talking about what will be in downtown Bristol."

Johnson said the BDDC, which selected the developer for the 17-acre, city-owned, former mall site, found "exactly" what Bristol needed in Don Monti, president of the Long Island-based Renaissance.

"You're going to get the best of me," said Monti during the contract-signing ceremony. "Good days are ahead. I look forward to working with everyone."

Chairman Richard Miecznikowski of the city finance board said he's excited for "a new era" for Bristol.

"When the project comes to fruition, it will mean increased revenues and a higher Grand List for the city," Miecznikowski said. "With the right combination of housing, retail and office space, downtown Bristol once again will be a vibrant part of our community."

The first thing he'll do, Monti said, after opening an office in City Hall, will be to meet with other downtown property owners. He's got a total of two years to come up with a final plan for the site, but said Tuesday he wants to charge ahead of the deadlines whenever possible.

Most residents of Bristol are looking forward to the changes coming downtown, according to Johnson.

"They want an active and exciting and vibrant downtown," said Johnson, that is clean and safe, a place to both live and work.

"This wasn't done by one person alone," said Mayor Art Ward, who said city councilors, BDDC board members, the Renaissance team and Bristol residents all contributed. "As the future goes forward, we're

going to need even more involvement to realize the potential of this venture.”

Department heads, elected officials and residents were in attendance.

“This is fantastic,” said Mike Nicastro, president of the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce. “Now the hard work starts.”

Finance board member John Smith said previous city administrations deserve credit for the deal signed Tuesday. Former Mayor Gerard Couture held office when the city purchased the old mall property, former Mayor William Stortz emptied it of tenants and Ward saw the building’s demolition.

“Unknowingly, they worked together to create this opportunity,” said Smith, who added he can’t wait to see some activity there.

“I’m hoping it’s sooner rather than later,” said Chief Building Official Guy Morin.

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