

Downtowners appoint Rempher interim director

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The Downtown Development Commission has a new interim director. Lon Rempher was hired Tuesday morning and was at his desk by the afternoon.

"We're very excited about it," said Darline Yeoman, commission vice chairman. "It is wonderful to have somebody on board again."

The Downtown Development office has been without a director since Bryan Schnell left nearly two weeks ago. The two-person staff has been running the office.

Rempher is a Rapid City native and a 1961 graduate of South Dakota School of Mines & Technology. He recently returned to Rapid City after

nearly 30 years away from the area. Much of his work has involved marketing and marketing management.

His time away included 16 years with the Ingersoll-Rand Co. in Minnesota, Illinois and New York, and six years with Contractors Supply Corp. in New York. Most recently he was vice president of Lon Smith Roofing in Fort Worth, Texas.

But through the years he has maintained his ties with the area, Rempher said. In the last half a dozen years he has returned often, and he believes the climate for economic development is good.

Those local ties are important for the position, Yeoman said.

Rempher hopes to reduce some of the controversy surrounding the commission's funding source, a downtown business improvement district (BID) that assesses merchants. He'll do a lot of thinking and listening in coming weeks, Rempher said.

"I have a business background — I'm not a city planner..." Rempher said. "We can talk about bottom-line things."

Rempher also is an applicant for the permanent position, but the commission has made no commitment, Yeoman said. Search committee members said last week they would conduct a full search for a permanent director.