

# Development board names new president

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Bob DeMersseman has been named president of the Rapid City Area Economic Development Partnership.

He is the former deputy to Wes Shelton, who was director of the Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development program until April. DeMersseman stepped in and has been running the program since.

Partnership Chairman Mark Mollers said the organization received 50 applications from throughout the United States. The list was narrowed to two people, interviewed by a board committee last weekend.

DeMersseman, 46, was the unanimous choice when the board met Thursday. The position of deputy, his former job, will remain vacant for the time being. He said the board would contract with a consultant when help is needed.

Mollers credited DeMersseman's experience in the economic development field. During his 17 years in the business, DeMersseman has worked for the Old West Regional Commission, the Black Hills Council of Local Governments, the state of South Dakota and a rural economic development program in Sisseton.

Perhaps strongest in his favor, DeMersseman's resume includes a list of recent economic plums he helped the city grab. The list includes Spiegel Inc.'s decision to open a customer service center here.



DeMersseman

He also helped bring Arizona gunmaker H-S Precision, California uniform maker Workrite and local firm Banner and Associates to the Rushmore Industrial Park.

The Economic Development Partnership and DeMersseman have more projects in the works. Mollers said DeMersseman was working with six companies that together would employ 300 people.

DeMersseman said Thursday afternoon that the appointment meant he now could go ahead with several marketing programs and commitments that had been on hold until the board named a president.

"It's a whole new program with new players," DeMersseman said.

According to a statement issued by the partnership board, DeMersseman's duties will include overseeing the new business attraction committee chaired by Sandy Rundi, the expansion and retention committee chaired by Jack Oberlitner, and the entrepreneurial committee chaired by Bob Knecht.

The Economic Development Partnership is a newly formed group that began at the first of the year. It replaces a chamber-affiliated Economic Development Foundation that came under fire for what some saw as a cadre of insiders.

About 50 people now serve on partnership committees, according to the announcement.

In the past, DeMersseman said, Rapid City has been "reactive," responding quickly to opportunities that come up. Now the partnership will be able to go out and create its own opportunities.

He plans to place more emphasis on local companies that want to expand and develop.