High bids put plaza start on hold

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MAIN STREET SQUARE: Destination Rapid City working to cut about $1 million from project without affecting quality or functions.

By Emilie Rusch
Journal staff

Construction on Main Street Square will be delayed at least a month after bids for the public plaza's development came in almost $1 million over budget.

Senftner, president of Destination Rapid City, the downtown economic development group that proposed the project, "We're still working into the alley. We're still doing the restrooms. We're still doing the ice rink. We're doing the fountain. None of that changes."

The $6.5 million project is being funded by $3.5 million in city Vision 2012 funds and $3 million in private donations. The total cost is split into two parts — $4.5 million for site construction and $2 million for specialty equipment and infrastructure. The plaza's ongoing maintenance will be funded through the downtown Business Improvement District, a special tax district approved by voters in June.

Of the three bids received by the city for the plaza's site construction, none were below the engineer's estimate of $4.5 million. The lowest bid was $5,453,000, according to the city Finance Office.

Senftner said Destination Rapid City is already working with its architects to identify cost savings that could be implemented without affecting the project's overall quality.

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The Rapid City Council voted 9-1 to deny the rezoning of 4.75 acres in the Fairway Hills area for a National American University expansion. A6

SQUARE: Changes may include using younger trees.

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Those could include using stained concrete instead of granite pavers and planting slightly younger trees and shrubs. "It won't change the way it operates or functions. It won't change the events," Senftner said.

Architects had yet to identify why bids came in at least $953,000 higher than expected. Senftner said Destination Rapid City plans to stay within its original budget of $6.5 million, instead of trying to raise additional private funds.

Under an agreement with the city, Destination Rapid City has committed to covering all construction costs above and beyond the city's contribution of $3.5 million. The plaza will be located in the city-owned parking lot at the corner of Sixth and Main streets.

"It's just responsible to live within our budget like any of us would," he said.

City officials said it was possible the revised project would have to be re-bid to meet state requirements.

But even with the four to five week delay, Senftner said construction should still begin this year and continue throughout the winter as weather allows.

"Main Street Square will be built," Mayor Alan Hanks said. "It will be built on budget."

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