City attorney’s office to keep working at moving Presidents Plaza forward

By Emilie Rusch  
Journal staff  
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Unless instructed otherwise, the city attorney’s office will continue to work with Presidents Plaza developers to move the mixed-used development at Sixth and St. Joseph streets forward.

Assistant city attorney Joel Landeen told aldermen at Wednesday’s Legal & Finance Committee that in absence of express direction not to give an extension, the staff has continued to work with the St. Joe Investment Group.

Under the development agreement, developers had until Dec. 6 to provide proof of financing and complete the land transfer, their fourth deadline in a year. But at that council meeting, the St. Joe Investment Group only presented an updated timeline for the $23 million project’s completion. The council then acknowledged the report.

“You haven’t terminated the contract or taken action to. I think that operates as an extension,” Landeen said.

As proposed, Presidents Plaza will include 430 parking spots, with 350 owned by the city, as well as 20,000 square feet of retail and office space and 40 loft apartments.

Developers announced in August 2010 that they had secured private financing for the $23 million project but have yet to disclose the name of the lender.

The investment group will also receive $2.8 million in city Vision 2012 funds in exchange for 350 public parking spaces. Public improvements are eligible for tax increment finance reimbursement.

On Wednesday, Bryan Vulcan, president of FourFront Design in Rapid City, provided no new information about the financing but promised to update the city council Feb. 22 on the project’s details and schedule.

He did not say whether that presentation would include a public letter of commitment from the bank offering financing.

“We assumed the council accepted our timetable, and we moved forward. This is a shift in the game,” Vulcan said. “We’d like to continue on with the schedule that we laid out.”

According to the developers’ revised timeline, the land should be transferred by March 15; the financing package finalized by April 30, groundbreaking by third quarter 2011 and grand opening in 2013.

Ward 2 Alderman Deb Hadcock said she wants to see the details of the building plan and the entire financing package again.

“People are asking me, and I’m in the dark until we get the plans,” Hadcock said.

The St. Joe Investment Group, a partnership that includes Sioux Falls’ Legacy Development and Vulcan, has been working on the project since July 2009.

Contact Emilie Rusch at 394-8453 or emilie.rusch@rapidcityjournal.com.