DDC director resigns position

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Staff Writer

Bryan Schnell, executive director of the Downtown Development Corp., resigned during Monday night's meeting of the local business improvement district (BID) board of directors.

"The change will be good for me," he said Monday night, "and fresh blood, new ideas will be good for the DDC."

Schnell has been the director of the non-profit downtown redevelopment group since it began in January 1988. He helped win approval of the BID, a tax mechanism that finances the DDC.

The BID, approved by the Rapid City Common Council in June, helped create a rift among downtown business owners. Schnell acknowledges he became somewhat of a lightning rod during the struggle for the BID.

Although the rift was not an expressed reason for his resignation, he said another person could probably come in and operate the organization without what he termed "baggage."

"Some people may be angry over the BID, and might have personalized that anger at me. It's unfortunate, but I'm not naive enough to not expect that," Schnell said.

"I'm still supportive of the work we've done together ... I'm glad we accomplished our initial goals."

After a short executive session Monday night, the BID board accepted Schnell's resignation without comment.

Schnell, a Rapid City native, said he planned to remain here. He returned to the city after 12 years in the military and in college.

"I have a couple of options I am pursuing and some other opportunities I'd like to explore," Schnell said. He offered to remain on the staff for two to four weeks while a replacement is sought.

"I have two very competent staff members on board right now, so we should continue on an even keel."

With a budget of somewhere between $160,000 and $180,000 a year, the three-person staff's job will be to coordinate promotions, marketing and development of the downtown area.

"I've spent 2 1/2 years of my life on this — I'm quite relieved, frankly — but I believe in this and the people I've worked with," Schnell said. "This decision is not

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an easy one, but it's totally my own."

BID supporters survived a number of battles getting it approved, including a recent referendum attempt that failed to garner enough valid signatures.

Several opponents of the BID wound up serving on its board of directors.

According to Schnell, some have developed a measure of support for the plan.

He said he had thought about resigning for some time but wanted to get the DDC up and running before stepping down.