Downtown groups working to merge with Schnell as director

Erin Andersen  
Staff Writer  

Two organizations that have worked to improve downtown Rapid City’s business climate are working to become one.

Monday, the Business Improvement District Board of Directors voted unanimously to adopt the name of the 2½-year-old Downtown Development Corp. With the adoption of the name comes the merging of the two organizations.

When the Development Corp. was established, its main purpose was to create the BID. With that accomplished, the only remaining task of the Development Corp. is to complete the Mainstreet program, and the BID board is willing to take that on, according to John Brewer, chairman of the BID board.

The BID board also voted unanimously to hire Bryan Schnell as its executive director. Schnell has worked as redevelopment director for the Downtown Development Corp. since the organization’s founding.

Brewer said the board’s executive committee was putting together a financial package for Schnell, if he agreed to accept the job.

"I hope he accepts. I know that he was anxious to continue what has been begun in the Mainstreet process," Brewer said. "He (Schnell) was the one who brought us to this point. We want to go forward with what will be a successful organization for downtown Rapid City."

Schnell was unavailable for comment.

Brewer said he hoped members of the BID board and the Development Corp. could reach agreement on the merger within the next two weeks.

"If the (merger) meetings are successful and the existing corporation agrees to it, we will become the Rapid City Downtown Development Corp. The old board will dissolve, the assets will be assumed by the (BID) district, and we will go forward from there," Brewer said.

He said merger of the organizations made sense.

"A number of (BID) board members made comments related to the extraordinary effort the Downtown Development Corp. had made," Brewer said. "They (corporation) already have the supplies and stationery and the phone book numbers, and those types of things of value. There is no sense in reinvesting in those things."

Although the two organizations would be alike in name and purpose, Brewer said there would be differences.

"I think it is fair to point out that the new board created by the (BID) district is certainly more inclusive of the downtown, and is a larger board than the existing corporation board," Brewer said.

The BID board has 25 elected members serving two- and three-year terms. There are three members from each of five downtown districts, and another 10 are elected at large.

The board meets twice a month — at 7 a.m. the second Wednesday and at 7 p.m. the fourth Monday. All meetings are open to the public and are in the council chambers of the City/School Administration Center.