

## Vlass moves ahead as city seeks new redevelopment chief

(18 reads)

By Debbie Carson, Staff Writer

TEMPLE TERRACE — City staff members will begin negotiations with The Vlass Group, the third developer in line to take a swing at the city's long-planned downtown redevelopment project. The Vlass Group is in partnership with Marketplace Advisors and M.J. Lant Developments, in the city's seven year quest for a new downtown.

Along with decided to start the negotiations with Vlass, the Temple Terrace City Council voted last Tuesday to find a new redevelopment director to replace Michael Marshall. He handed in his resignation on Monday, Oct. 20, effective immediately. City Manager Kim Leinbach will fill the post until a replacement is hired.

Marshall cited personality conflicts and differences in business philosophies as part of his reasons behind leaving the city. In an e-mail to The Beacon last week, Marshall declined to comment further on his resignation.

Instead, Marshall said, "At this point, I feel that the City is taking the correct action to move this project forward."

The council discussed trying to find someone who could serve as the redevelopment director and as project manager – someone who isn't "buried under staff" as Councilman Ken Hallway put it.

The Vlass Group presented plans for a \$150 million, nearly 590,000-square-foot downtown project that would include 102 residential units and hundreds of thousands of square feet of retail, office and restaurant space. More than 57,000 square feet has been earmarked for civic uses including a City Hall. Hillsborough Community College and the Arts and Education Center could also be part of the project.

The decision to move forward with The Vlass Group came after hearing a long list of options from Leinbach.

Those options included, among others:

- resending a Request for Qualifications to interested bidders using today's market conditions;
- holding the land and selling the land when the market turns around;
- phasing development based on Ram/Pinnacle's work product and hiring a developer to build that project;
- having the city act as master developer to build the project;
- demolish the shopping centers on the site;
- or selling the property outright to the highest bidder.

The council's Community Redevelopment Agency Committee – consisting of staff members and Councilman Ron Govin – recommended going with The Vlass Group to find out what the company is willing to pay and how much it expects from the city.

Before the vote, the council asked for comments from the 30 or so residents who showed up at the meeting early Thursday morning.

Five spoke, including Dee Griffith, Alexander Ratensky, Richard Reina, Bill Martin and Grant Rimbey. They all spoke in favor of moving the project forward.

Both Martin and Rimbey told the council that residents need to be more involved in the process.

"It's been a long time since the citizens have been excited about the project," Rimbey said. "We're getting long in the tooth."

The council approved the committee's recommendation unanimously and also agreed to add a city resident to its advisory committee.

Councilman Hallway was the only one to vote against the recommendation, noting that he wanted a member of the council's original STAR Committee to be on the new committee. His fellow council members felt it would be better to open the seat to anyone living in the city.

The council members will provide a list of names to Leinbach and later


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vote on who the new committee member will be.

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