

LCDC director: Email will simplify messages

By TOM HASSLINGER
Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE — Lake City Development Corp. Executive Director Tony Berns said he prefers to conduct future interviews with The Press through email to ensure accurate information is relayed through the paper.

Berns said Wednesday that the written format could be a better way to communicate contextual issues on urban renewal projects with a lot of moving parts.

He also said that the agency is still talking to the newspaper — that all avenues of communication are open with the

public — but email correspondence could simplify messages coming from the agency.

“Written communication between the LCDC and Press will enhance the accuracy of the information shared with the public, especially where more complicated/involvement issues are being discussed,” Berns wrote. “Written responses on issues/questions are just an additional step in assuring that information is accurately communicated.”

Berns and urban renewal critic Mary Souza had a disagreement about policy pertaining to LCDC's record request format which began at the

end of September. The Press inquired about the standing of the dispute last week.

Berns said the decision to prefer email correspondence, which he told the paper on Monday, didn't have anything to do with the records dispute.

He said he'd been thinking about making the decision for some time, and was clear that the decision wasn't part of the records request issue.

“I have been thinking for quite a while how better to enhance communications with the Press,” he wrote. “This added step of written responses had nothing to do with Mrs. Souza's request.”

No firm answer on property tax appeals

After consulting with the Idaho Association of County Assessors, the Kootenai County assessor still doesn't have a firm answer to a question about property tax appeals raised this year.

County officials were torn several months ago about whether individuals can appeal property taxes on land they don't own or have direct interest in.

“The (statutory) language is vague enough to be interpreted in a couple ways,” said Assessor

Mike McDowell.

There was no consensus at the last Idaho Association of Counties district meeting, he added, so McDowell took it to the assessors' group.

But members were divided there, too.

“The assessors came back with the same split, that it can be interpreted in two different ways,” he said.

For now, McDowell said, he will report his findings at an Idaho Association of Counties

meeting scheduled at the county Administration Building this Friday.

Otherwise, there's not much to be done, he said.

“I think (the appeals process) will continue at the status quo, until such time it percolates as an issue of significance for somebody else,” he said.

The issue came up during the meeting of the Board of Equalization this year, when a Spirit Lake resident wanted to appeal an aspect of Silverwood Theme Park's property taxes.

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