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WDPC Board Views Plans—Executive members of the Winchester Downtown Program Corporation look over current plans concerning their project with downtown's nine-block area. Pictured here from left to right are Sean Crabtree, president of the WDPC; Margaret Lynch, vice president; Bill Cowan, executive director; and David Cowan, secretary. Not pictured is Fernando Santisteban, treasurer.

WDPC Names Cowan Executive Director

Deidre Ortiz, Staff Writer

The Winchester Downtown Program Corporation, the non-profit organization in charge of the downtown revitalization project and grant recently named Bill Cowan as its executive director.

Cowan officially starts Nov. 1, and the members of WDPC are pleased to have him take a leadership role in the project. Sean Crabtree, president of the WDPC, believes Cowan's role is one of major importance.

"We see Bill's role as not only overseeing the construction in the area but also being the primary go-to person for the downtown merchants as well as this board. It will allow the board to shift its focus somewhat to the other major areas of the project such as business recruitment and current business development." Crabtree said.

Margaret Lynch, vice president of the program, agrees with Crabtree that Cowan's position will help the entire group stay up-to-date and organized.

"We need Bill, because all of us on the board, all eleven of us, have full-time jobs," she said. "So we need his services to be sure that it's seamless and flawless and that everyone stays happy and well-informed."

On top of being the go-to man, Cowan will also work closely with the city's engineers and with the consulting group Looney Ricks Kiss to keep construction on track and monitor the design aspects of the project.

Crabtree explained that this project deals with a nine-block area of the square and is a further advancement of the city's TDOT grant and construction around the four blocks of the courthouse, which is due to start in November.

Lynch also added that while the four-block area's construction is made possible through a grant from the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the WDPC funding comes by way of a grant generated directly from the state's portion of the downtown sales tax refunded specifically to upgrade the nine-block area.

They also want to reassure the county residents that none of the money toward the project is coming from county or city treasuries.

"The two key points," Crabtree said, "are that it costs the city taxpayers absolutely nothing and that these dollars come only from dollars generated in this nine-block area."

Overall, the WDPC plans to bring more businesses and more activity to downtown Winchester, and Vice President Lynch said that once the projects are done, the area will be a "a destination point" where people can walk around, eat at restaurants and do shopping.

"There will be more things for people to do. And that's our goal, to bring the downtown back alive again."

Cowan also believes that this project is more than just revitalizing the buildings downtown, but the WDPC plans to bring in businesses because "the more successful we are in this nine-block area, the more successful we're going to be...there's no way that we can keep from winning with this plan, it's good for everybody."

But for now, Cowan is enthusiastically waiting for the plans to unfold, and is "eager to dive in and discover" the details of what it is his job will entail.

"I'm just going to do whatever it takes to make this thing work."