

Business owners vote EID out of existence



Michael Rose, Statesman Journal 6:34 a.m. PDT May 28, 2014



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Opponents of a city-managed business booster program have prevailed in their efforts to dissolve the Downtown Salem Economic Improvement District.

Salem City Council on Tuesday learned that the Economic Improvement District, or EID, had essentially been voted out of existence by downtown property owners.

The EID pays for downtown marketing and beautification programs, such as the Downtown Clean Team and First Wednesday promotions.

Property owners in a 28-block area have paid about \$200,000 a year in assessments to support the EID, which was established in January 2008.

Every three years, the EID must be reauthorized through a remonstrance process. It's basically a vote on whether to proceed with the EID assessment.

To kill the EID, property owners representing 33 percent of the assessment that is levied needed to file written objections.

Salem City Manager Linda Norris said the city had received written objections from property owners representing nearly 36 percent of the assessment. That gave opponents of the EID sufficient numbers to bring the program to an abrupt end.

Roughly 16 months ago, the city took over administration of the EID after terminating a contract with Salem Downtown Partnership, a private group.

The Salem City Manager and a 16-member steering committee have since directed the use of EID.

Some downtown business interests have praised efforts to make the area more inviting to shoppers, especially the Downtown Clean Team.

Critics, however, resented the city's control of EID funds and asserted that downtown promotions, such as First Wednesday, had become ineffective.

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