

# R500 000 for work on Verwoerd Square

VALERIE BOJÉ, Staff Reporter

**THE city council will pay consultants more than R500 000 for work done on the development of the new Verwoerd Square.**

At the same time it is to request detailed accounts for other monies said to be owing before meeting further claims.

This follows one of the most unusual debates in the present council's history, including a delay of more than an hour while private consultations took place between management committee chairman Mr James Leach and opposition leader Mr Paul Fouche.

Both the National and Conservative parties then requested adjournments to caucus and Mr Fouche was locked in lengthy discussion with one of his councillors, Mr Pieter Strobos.

The issue of payment of the Studio 3 Architects' account had already been referred back to the council's management committee a number of times

in recent months following allegations and objections raised by Mr Strobos.

## Settled

A recommendation to the council, by the director city planning, Mr Fritz Kraehmer, called for the issue of payment to be settled.

Publicity about the debate over payment had "damaged" the image of the city council and its consultants.

Misrepresentations could affect the success of the council's partnership with the private sector.

Mr Leach said early on in the meeting there had not been time for the management committee to prepare answers to nearly 50 questions.

Many of these refer to possible relationships and agreements between the council, Studio 3 as consultants, and Murray & Roberts as developers — from Mr Strobos.

He later asked that the payment issue be discussed in camera to prevent the publication of things said which could adversely affect development.

He acknowledged later that after informal discussions over supper he had decided to hold the debate in public.

Mr Bob Zylstra (NP) compared the relationship between the partners as that in marriage — nothing could break a good marriage as successfully as rumours.

## Allegations

He added that the project had much merit for Pretoria and said it was important to "get on with the job" and not let it be ruined by petty politics.

Mr Leach said after the meeting that the ruling that detailed accounts be submitted would give councillors — at a management committee meeting — the opportunity to test any allegations they may have against the facts.

He did not believe the city council meeting was the place to air such grievances, he said.

He was, however, confident that the project could now continue as planned.

● The new development will be in the block opposite the State Theatre bounded by Van der Walt, Church, Prinsloo and Vermeulen streets.