

Victoria: 'Not a done deal'

By **HERB BOYD**

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A couple of weeks ago, this paper reported that a developer had been chosen to oversee the renovation of the Victoria Theater. But, if Ethel Bates is right, that is not a done deal.

"That decision has been sent back to the drawing board," Bates told the Amsterdam News prior to her opening remarks at a meeting at the State Office Building last week. "It's not a done deal until a public hearing has been convened. What the Dan-

forth people have is a provisional contract and a memorandum of agreement."

During her meeting, attended by a handful of supporters, Bates distributed her own proposal, which she said was delivered on time after a snafu with one of her associates. "As a community-based organization," Bates' proposal reads, "our goal is to fight the outside developers to keep the project in the community and develop the project for the community, which will be maintained by the community."

Bates and several other participants at the meeting uttered derisive comments about Assemblyman Keith Wright, stating that he had lied about circumstances related to the project at another public hearing.

Later, Wright appeared to defend himself and to set the record straight. Wright explained how he had been removed as chair of the Harlem Development Community Corporation, then reinstated. "It came down to two proposals," Wright said, "and the board

voted in favor of Danforth because they thought it was the superior proposal."

Wright concurred with Bates that a "memorandum of agreement" has been signed, which makes the agreement only provisional. As for the requirement that a public hearing be held, he wasn't exactly sure.

But Steve Williams, the CEO of Danforth, said a public hearing is necessary before there's total approval. He refused to comment on any other matters related to the proposals or the process.

In a letter from Patrick Foye, chairman of Empire State Development, it is clearly stated that a public hearing is part of the approval process. But at the moment, none have been scheduled.

"I think one will occur in four to six months," Williams said.

According to Foye, there is a law that requires a notice to be published for the meeting once a date has been scheduled.

Whenever that occurs, you can bet that Bates and her followers will be there to make sure that their interests are served.