

Petitions to repeal BID out again

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Opponents of a downtown Rapid City Business Improvement District (BID) are again trying to gather enough petition signatures to repeal the BID.

Attorney Walter Bradsky, a spokesman for the Committee for Fairness, said two petitions were being circulated, one to repeal the ordinance establishing the BID and one to repeal the ordinance imposing the BID tax on downtown structures.

The opponents tried once before to put the BID to a public vote. They wanted to refer the BID to the July 24 city special election ballot. But 7th Circuit Judge Merton Tice Jr. ruled July 17 that enough of the signatures were invalid to throw out the petitions.

The opponents' current effort is an initiated measure, which also could be put to a vote.

"We feel it is the power of the people independent of the city council (which passed the BID ordinances) to propose and enact legislation that would be fair," Bradsky said.

Bryan Schnell, executive director of the Downtown Development Corp., the group which first proposed the BID, said he had no comment on the new petition drive.

The BID is a plan to assess downtown businesses and property owners based on the square footage of their property and use the money to promote and improve the downtown. BID opponents have said the BID was unfair because its \$2,000 assessment cap favored big business.

Bradsky said the Committee for Fairness had six months to gather the signatures to call for a special election.

"We've had overwhelming support," Bradsky said. "We've got probably 50 people already who have asked to circulate petitions. They are really torqued off. If people are able to vote on it, I think we will see the BID repealed."

Bradsky said people believed the BID tax was unfair to small businesses.

"A lot of them are fearful of a lot of the grandiose plans they have for the future (of the downtown)," he said.