BID board to be picked Thursday

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The newly created Business Improvement District (BID) will go ahead with a board of directors election Thursday even though there are 25 candidates for 25 seats on the board.

An election still is needed to establish the length of each director’s term, said Bryan Schnell, redevelopment director of the Downtown Development Corp.

Top vote-getters will be named to two-year terms and people receiving fewer votes will serve one-year terms, at least in the first election, Schnell said. This will be done so that not all the board will be up for re-election next year, he said.

In subsequent elections, all directors probably will be elected to two-year terms.

Meanwhile, opponents of the BID haven’t given up hope of repealing the BID. They are circulating petitions to refer the measure to a special citywide vote, said opposition attorney Walter Bradsky. They have until June 29 to submit petitions to the city asking for a referendum.

Schnell had said previously the petition drive would not stop the board of directors’ secret ballot election, which will be Thursday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the City/School Administration Center.

Any business owner or property owner who will be assessed under the BID can vote. Anyone who is to be assessed also could run for a spot on the board.

“Quite frankly, I had to go back to my lists and encourage a number of people to run to get the 25,” Schnell said. “Twenty-five is a big board, I guess.”

The board, once in place, will write its own by-laws, which could include making the board smaller. But the BID organizers felt it was important to start with a big board so that many people could be involved.

Schnell said 21 of the candidates came forward on their own. The rest had inquired about running but had to be encouraged to run. Nominations closed at 3 p.m. Tuesday.

“What we have is 25 people from extremely varied backgrounds and varied opinions on the BID, which I think will make a damn healthy board,” he said.

The BID, enacted by the Rapid City Common Council at the request of Downtown Development Corp. members and others, would assess merchants and/or property owners 10 cents per square foot per year on their business’ structural space, with a maximum of $2,000 per business.

BID supporters want the money to promote and improve the downtown. The assessments are expected to raise about $185,000 a year.

But BID opponents say the assessment cap is unfair to small businesses. They also have complained that a straw vote taken to gauge support for BID was not a secret ballot, and that some opponents were too intimidated to vote.

The straw vote was 138 in favor of the BID and 128 opposed.

The BID includes the downtown south of Omaha Street and north of Kansas City Street, and east of West Boulevard and west of East Boulevard.

Ten board members will be elected at large, and three will be elected in each of five districts. Here is a list of the candidates and the businesses they represent:

District 1, from East Boulevard to Second Street: John Brewer, Rushmore State Bank; Herb Kaden, Kaden, Clary & Associates; Richard Foy, Buy Here Pay Here Inc.

District 2, Second to Fourth streets: Roger Heacock, Black Hills Federal Credit Union; Phyllis Johnson, Marlene’s Intimate Apparel; Dick Frederick, Pella Window Store.

District 3, Fourth to Sixth streets: Tim Powell, Red Wing Shoe Store; Randy Aker, Hebron Brick; Steve Rolinger, Allstate Insurance.

District 4, Sixth Street to Mount Rushmore Road: Mike Crackel, Crackel Photography; Tom Uhrich, Uhrich Goldsmiths; Sherri Bain, Bain Advertising.

District 5, Mount Rushmore Road to West Boulevard: Fred Whiting, Knecht Home Center; Lois McMahon, Rapid Check Collection; Dorrance Dusek, owner of the Dusek Building.

At large: Darline Yeoman, Darline’s Fashions; Jim Gabel, In Stitches; Gary Ebel, Connecting Point Computer Center; James Taylor, Hibbloom Black Hills Gold and the Art Bank; Deb Brown, Historic South Dakota Foundation; Peggy Busse, The Top Drawer; Tom Lee, Linisco Private Ledger Financial; Lee Geiger, the Main Frame Shop; Fred Thurston, Architecture by Thurston; and Naomi Kraai, Rushmore Stamps.