Slim majority supports BID

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Now that a straw vote has shown that most downtown business people favor creating a business improvement district (BID), supporters and opponents should join together to make the program a success, the chairman of the Downtown Improvement Board said Wednesday.

"People who have been against the BID for some time have said that a majority of the downtown business people do not want a downtown business improvement district," Paul Strassels said. "This vote proves that a majority are in fact in favor of a business improvement district. Now it is time for those who have initially been opposed to BID to join forces with the rest of downtown to make this program work for Rapid City."

The straw vote of business opera-

tors and others who would be assessed under the BID showed that 138 favored it and 128 were against it. Seventy-six percent of those eligible to vote cast ballots.

Strassels said that one BID supporter, banker John Brewer, had called the election outcome "a stunning victory" for BID.

"I have to kind of agree with that considering the negative feelings that were running around for the first BID proposal," Strassels said.

The Business Improvement Board of which Strassels was chairman was appointed late last year by Mayor Keith Carlyle and the Rapid City Common Council. The initial BID proposal was the subject of bitter debate. Members of the appointed board were told to discuss the BID, try to reach a consensus and bring back a recommendation to the com-

mon council.

Strassels said the board would recommend to the common council Monday night that the city vote to put in effect the revised BID plan, which is a scaled-down version of the original proposal.

"The nice thing is it is a unanimous recommendation," he said. "I should point out to you that at the first BID meeting back in December, the original show of hands was 11 in favor, nine opposed."

Strassels called the Business Improvement Board's work "a rigorous process" but worthwhile.

"You have people who have come from opposing points of view who have come to compromise for the good of Rapid City," he said. "No matter how much blood is spilled, that is worthwhile."

Majority OKs BID

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