

# Civic group ready for billboard fight

By Emilie Rusch  
Journal staff

The newly reorganized Mount Rushmore Road Group is gearing up to fight a proposed electronic billboard near Wilson Park.

The Sign Code Board of Appeals will take up a request Wednesday from Lamar Outdoor Advertising

to convert an existing billboard at 1808 Mount Rushmore Road to digital advertisements that would continue to exceed city size requirements.

Group president Debra Jensen said the last thing Mount Rushmore Road needs is a billboard larger

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Kristina Barker/Journal staff

Mount Rushmore Road Group is against a proposed electronic billboard that could replace a print billboard at St. Andrew Street and Mount Rushmore Road.

## BILLBOARD: Only the north face would be digital.

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than what the city allows.

"What we're trying to do is make the road more attractive, more visitor friendly, to improve the look for the community," Jensen said. "We feel, like most of Rapid City, that there are probably enough signs, particularly off-premise billboards."

The current billboard, located at the corner of Mount Rushmore Road and St. Andrew Street in the parking lot shared by Quiznos and a casino, is 378 square feet in size and 45 feet tall, building official Brad Solon said.

The city's sign code

## If you go

What: Sign Code Board of Appeals

When: 7 a.m. Wednesday

Where: Third floor east conference room, City/School Administration Center

limits off-premise billboards to 250 square feet and 30 feet tall, rules that went into effect after the billboard was installed. Lamar is requesting a variance to allow the sign to stay at its current size.

"Whenever you ask to convert a billboard, you have to comply with all the current regulations," Growth Management Director Marcia Elkins said. "We've had a number of billboards they've brought into compliance."

Terry Olson of Lamar

Outdoor Advertising declined to comment Monday. But according to minutes from the Nov. 18 sign code meeting, Olson said the company considered downsizing the billboard to meet code requirements, a move that would have saved it considerable money as well. But because of visibility concerns, the sign needs to remain the current size and height so that passing motorists can read it. Only the north face would be converted to digital advertisements.

Lamar has offered to take down a billboard on Highway 79 in exchange for getting the variance for Mount Rushmore Road.

Jensen said the concession is a matter of apples and oranges. But a flashier

billboard on Mount more Road could hurt group's chances of getting beautification design before it even applied for construction in 2014, a state, city and road have been working to include some visual improvements in the project.

"We're just in the steps of Mount Rushmore Road getting improved," Jensen said. "We don't want to do anything to jeopardize it."

The billboard would require a Planning Commission and Historic Preservation Commission review, due to its location, Elkins said.

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