

September 11, 2025

Ramsey City Council 7550 Sunwood Drive NW Ramsey, MN 55303

RE: Clarification Letter Accompanying Submitted Packet – Variance Appeal for Off-Premises Billboard at 6111 Highway 10 NW

Dear Mayor and Members of the Ramsey City Council,

Thank you for your time during last night's meeting. I am writing to provide context and clarification regarding the packet of information I submitted to each of you at that meeting, which outlined our past efforts to place a digital billboard at a location in East Ramsey.

Please note, this letter is not the formal appeal. That document is submitted separately as an accompaniment to the packet that I handed out in Tuesday night city council meeting. This letter is only intended to clarify the materials included in the packet and respond to several comments and questions raised during last night's City Council discussion.

**1. Clarifying Staff Conduct:** Nothing in the attached packet is intended to suggest that Todd Larson acted inappropriately or gave us faulty guidance. On the contrary, we believe he performed his duties with integrity, providing direction based on the ordinances in place at that time. Our concern lies with the broader process, specifically, the sequence of events and the handling of variance consideration without a formal window of public notice or opportunity for all stakeholders to apply under the revised interpretation.

**2. Completion Status of Our Application:** It was stated at the meeting that our earlier application was incomplete due to the absence of a survey and unpaid application fee. We want to clarify that we were instructed via email and follow-up phone calls that a professional survey was required to verify compliance with the 2-mile ordinance. We made the reasonable decision to delay spending several thousand dollars on a survey after our own measurements showed the location to fall just inside the 2-mile limit. It was our understanding that an application without that survey showing a 2-mile separation would not be accepted. As such, the fee was never submitted, this is consistent with the process followed in our previous two approved applications, where the fee was submitted only after all materials were deemed complete.

**3. Nature of Email Communication and Decision Timeline:** While the email thread included in the packet may appear to end abruptly, the decision not to proceed was concluded in phone calls between our team and city staff. Mr. Larson later sent us a summary email and letter to close the file, reiterating that without a survey confirming the site was outside the 2-mile restriction, the application could not move forward.

**4. Clarification of Comments in the Record:** One council member referenced an email comment from our team stating, "There's absolutely no reason to move forward." That statement was not a withdrawal of our interest. Rather, it was a reflection of the obstacle presented by the spacing requirement and our attempt to get further direction. We were seeking clarity and support on whether other options might even be considered, given that

a variance had never previously been approved in this context. At the time, it was presented as unlikely or inappropriate under the ordinance, and we acted accordingly.

**5. Property Rights and Public Notification:** One of our core concerns with the variance granted to Kenjoh is that adjacent property owners east of the proposed location were not formally notified, despite the fact that their billboard eligibility is directly affected by this decision. By granting a variance for a sign 1.85 miles from an existing one, the City has effectively eliminated the ability for any other landowner within that corridor to benefit from a sign lease agreement. That impact is not minor. These are property rights that deserved a seat at the table. Public notice should have extended to these owners.

**6. Stakeholder Notification:** As the owner of the only two existing digital billboard structures in the City of Ramsey, structures approved under the very ordinance now being varied, we believe iDigital should have been notified of any proposed variance request affecting our industry, especially one within 1.85 miles of an existing location. While we acknowledge this is not a legal requirement under current noticing procedures, we submit that best practices in municipal transparency and stakeholder engagement support this type of notification.

**7. Broader Process Concerns:** Finally, we believe that the variance process as executed, granting an exception to a company that submitted its application before the rest of the community was made aware a variance would be considered, sets a precedent that disadvantages other landowners and stakeholders. When rules change, there should be a window for all interested parties to submit under the new conditions. That opportunity was not provided here.

We appreciate your consideration of these points. The accompanying packet outlines the timeline and depth of our original efforts to bring a third billboard location to the east end of town, under the original rules. The circumstances and procedures surrounding the recently approved variance deserve a closer look, and we respectfully submit that this appeal is warranted on those grounds.

Sincerely,

Josh Gilleland  
iDigital Outdoor  
3235 Oak Ridge Loop E  
West Fargo, ND 58078  
Josh@iDigitalOutdoor.com  
701-369-6100