Art withdrawal allows gallery to open again

By MELISSA MOORE
Advocate staff writer

Three artists withdrew their work from a Baton Rouge Gallery exhibit Tuesday to end a controversy over one artist’s work that had shut down the gallery, the head of the gallery’s governing board said.

Roberta Cohen, Gregory Elliott and Bobby Silverman had nearly all of the works removed Tuesday, board president Michael Daugherty said.

Daugherty said the board will meet with representatives from the East Baton Rouge Parish Recreation and Park Commission “to try to get back together again” and to set a policy to prevent such a conflict from arising again.

“The contract with BREC and the gallery will be modified,” Daugherty said.

Rip Wilkinson, a BREC Commissioner and gallery board member who serves as a liaison between the two groups, said artist Roberta Cohen pulled her work to stop “the trauma” the gallery was experiencing.

BREC commissioners objected to two of Cohen’s drawings that included nude male and female figures and told the gallery Friday to either remove the drawings or close the gallery, which is housed in a BREC-owned building in City Park.

The gallery, which has been closed since Friday, should reopen today, Wilkinson said.

Some artists have volunteered to bring in work to replace the exhibit that was removed, he said.

Cohen was reportedly out of state and could not be reached for comment.

The other artists in the exhibit also could not be reached.

Gallery Executive Director Kathleen Sunderman did not immediately return phone messages left at her home and office late Tuesday.