Cajundome contract tabled

Key terms of proposal need changes, councilman argues

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LAFAYETTE — For the second week in a row, the City Council tabled a contract for a marketing study of the Cajundome.

Councilman Bob Bacon urged tableing the proposal because key terms of the contract need to be amended first.

Last week, several council members spoke against the study, which will cost the city $28,000, with USL and the Lafayette Parish Convention and Visitors Bureau putting up $5,000 each. In addition, expenses may cost as much as $12,000.

The administration is pushing hard for the study by the Laventhol and Horwath accounting firm of Dallas. But council members Wilfred Pierre and F.V. “Pappy” Landry have questioned the expenditure.

Mayor Dud Lastrapes said the study is essential in order to make progress at utilizing the dome on a cost-effective basis. He said the dome’s deficit was $360,000 last fiscal year, and that figure could double for the current fiscal year.

William Rucks, chairman of the dome’s advisory board, said the study would provide a fresh, unbiased approach towards managing the dome.

“If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you,” said Jerry Brents, another member of the advisory board.

Landry agreed that the study is needed, but he said recommendations by a consultant were obtained before the dome was completed, and those recommendations were not followed.

Landry said the firm which takes over long-term management of the dome probably would conduct its own marketing study.

The issue of the Cajundome’s management, after last month’s resignation of Mike Barber, also came up with the introduction of an ordinance to have Recreation Leisure Services providing management of the dome until Oct. 31, the end of the city’s fiscal year. The council can take final action on the ordinance after two weeks.

After Oct. 31, the city would determine who would provide management. RLS now provides a number of services at the facility, including concessions.

Councilman Bob Bacon questioned whether proposals should be taken from other firms interested in managing the Cajundome for the interim period. He complained that the administration failed to tell the council that RLS would be the firm to manage the dome for the rest of the fiscal year.

“Before tonight, no one has asked this council ‘What do you think of this?’” Bacon said.

But Lastrapes contended he has kept the council informed of his intentions.

Three companies were at the meeting to offer their services, but one company representative said he would be interested only in a long-term contract.

The council approved introduction of the ordinance by a 4-1 vote, with Landry voting no.