Cajundome plan approved

By MIKE INGALLINERA
Staff Writer

A new Cajundome management plan to hire an in-house director while retaining a private firm on a consultant basis was approved Wednesday at the arena's advisory board meeting.

Cajundome Commission Chairman W.W. Rucks III said that the selection process of hiring an in-house director can begin now and the New Orleans-based Facilities Management Group (FMG) would assist in both the operations of the Cajundome and the search for the new director. The board will meet at the Cajundome on Jan. 20 at 1:30 p.m. to work out the final details of its decision.

The Commission discussed the advantages and disadvantages of private versus public management before compromising on what Rucks termed a "hybrid" arrangement which would be the "best of both worlds."

"I hope that the Commission could have a list of people (potential candidates for director) within 30 days," Rucks said.

Commissioners Mario Mamalakis and Glenn Weber presented a report of their interviews with a group of private management firms. They had videotaped all the discussions with the firms and made copies available to the other members of the commission.

The report detailed the "pro's and cons" of private management for the Cajundome. It maintained that private enterprise would have:

- more of a profit incentive than traditional government;
- greater flexibility in dealing with non-traditional aspects of Cajundome operation (such as bids, laws and pay scales);
- better contacts and resources in the entertainment industry;
- the ability to influence concert acts to include Lafayette in their "tour;"
- the ability to take risks in terms of promotions;
- economies of scale relative to purchasing and promotions.

The report also pointed out the disadvantages of private management:

- any contracts would be signed and binding;
- maintenance of the Cajundome might be neglected as a means of maximizing profit;
- some measure of "local touch" would be lost although local people would be employed;
- profits would go out of the community instead of "all monies" remaining locally;
- there would be a greater risk of losing current staff.

Commissioners Dr. James Caillier and Dr. Kenneth Brown advocated public management of the Cajundome.

"Our pluses are their (Weber's and Mamalakis') minuses and their minuses are our pluses," said Brown. "The taxpayers want local control and accountability. A local manager can serve our needs very well."

Caillier made the motion "that we hire a full-time in-house director to manage the Cajundome."

Mamalakis seconded the motion.

After further discussion of the advantages of private sector participation in the Cajundome management, Caillier amended his motion to include the participation of a private firm on a consultant basis.

The motion passed unanimously.

Weber said that Recreation and Leisure Services will retain its four-year contract for handling Cajundome concessions. He said that although RLS head Ken Young's $75,000 salary had been criticized, Young made a major contribution by cutting the Cajundome's costs by $250,000.

In other business, Cajundome Business Manager Gregory Davis reported that the arena's net operating income for November 1987 was $76,192.

However, about $32,000 in payroll and other expenses incurred during November was not included in the figure because of the City's system of accounting, Davis said.

Mamalakis told Davis he should include the City's annual $500,000 subsidy to the Cajundome as income in future financial reports.