Mayor Wins Veto Battle
Council Still Battling Over Dome Panel

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Mayor Dud Lastrapes won the battle over his veto of a City Council plan to appoint a commission to oversee the Cajundome and the Municipal Auditorium, but the victory might be temporary.

The Council last night unanimously supported the mayor's veto, despite opposition to letting the mayor name the members of the commission. Councilmen voted 3-2 two weeks ago to take over the city's appointments after rejecting the mayor's plans at least four times. The mayor then vetoed their plans.

The issue probably will come up again next week, councilmen said, when a resolution — which the mayor has no authority to veto — is expected to be proposed. The resolution probably will include the same stipulations, including the appointment of five members by councilmen with approval of a majority of the Council and not the mayor.

Ritchey, who proposed the ordinance that the mayor vetoed, is expected to propose the resolution. Asked whether he will bring it up next week, he replied "It depends on what the majority of the Council wants to do. The sooner, the better. Next week might do. The Council is going to have to prevail in the final analysis but there's still no decision on how to handle it."

Hudson says he believes the resolution, if offered, will pass. "According to a legal interpretation that we have received, the city charter has no provision for the mayor to veto a resolution and creation of a commission is not one of the 17 or 18 things that have to be done by ordinance."

Lastrapes says the resolution proposal "creates a new ballgame." He said he is concerned that the Council's taking over of the appointments is a precedent that usurps the power of the administrative branch of city government.

Most commissions are appointed by the mayor with the Council's advice and consent, he said, except for the Airport Commission representative, who is appointed solely by the Council.

The City Planning Commission, which was set up under state law, is appointed by the mayor without the Council's consent.

"The City Council and the administration ought to be involved in appointments," Lastrapes said. "Commissions report to the administration — the mayor's office."

The appointment of a commission has been batted around for more than four months. Councilmen put off approving the mayor's and USL President Ray Authement's appointments several times, saying that they didn't want to approve them until Gov. Dave Treen approved funding to complete the facility. They said they believed appointing the commission would be a signal to the state that the city was ready to take over the facility even if it was not finished.

When Treen committed his support to securing the funds, councilmen revealed their objections to some of the appointments proposed by Lastrapes and Authement. A review of the appointment procedure showed that they had no right of approval over Authement's choices but could object to Lastrapes' nominees.

The mayor refused to withdraw any of his nominees and three councilmen refused to withdraw their objections, which led to the alternative Council plan and the mayor's veto.