Dome commission OK's hockey deal

By Nissa Darbonne
Staff Writer

The Cajundome floor will soon freeze over.

Dome Commission members voted unanimously Thursday to lease the dome for 10 years for minor league ice hockey play in exchange for a $1.4 million permanent ice rink in the dome.

The rink nearest to Lafayette is in Houston.

"If this deal goes upside down, the worst thing that could happen is the Cajundome owns an ice hockey rink free and clear," Pat LeBlanc, the commission's chairman, summarized.

• Hockey matches will begin in November.
• Rink installation will take six weeks.
• Public ice skating will be run by a private contractor, and conducted while the dome isn't being used for hockey or any other events, according to current plans.

Commission Chairman Pat LeBlanc

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Some details of the deal are left to be worked out before it's final, and officials at the dome's meeting Thursday said:

• Parker will present his lease with the Cajundome and other documents by next Thursday to East Coast Hockey League officials to buy a franchise from the league, for $1 million, to place a team at the Cajundome.
• Parker's offer must be approved by the league. The new Cajundome team will expand the league to 18 teams and become part of a new Southern Division.
• The Cajundome must install a rink, estimated to cost $1.4 million; get state approval of changing the dome's construction; and get a 10-year loan to pay the bill.
• Parker and another local business are to secure a total $1.4 million letter of credit with a bank that will pay the Cajundome partially if the dome doesn't make enough in a year off hockey or public skating to pay the dome's $1.4 million note in any year.

Please see Hockey, A-7
Members of the Cajundome Commission discuss the proposal to bring hockey to the Dome. The commission members are Dr. Ray Authement, Mario Mamalakis, Tom Brown, George Favaloro and Commission Chairman Pat LeBlanc.

were the uncertain ones at 6 p.m., at the end of a 5-minute recess called to ponder the proposition after an hour-long discussion.

Wright urged the commission to make a unanimous vote "for the community, for the dome, and for this project."

Mayor Kenny Bowen, who appointed Favaloro to the dome commission, had told The Advertiser last week, when hearing of the potential hockey deal, "My guy ain't gonna vote for it."

Bowen is Favaloro's father-in-law.

Favaloro voted for the hockey deal, as well as LeBlanc, who is appointed by the city's chief administrative officer, who is appointed by Bowen.