City and USL officials who promised to hammer out a new management plan for the Cajundome have apparently begun to nail down the details.

The Advertiser has learned that discussions between them, while not yet final, resulted earlier this week in submission of paperwork to the City attorney for review.

That sets in motion a series of events by which a revised operating agreement, with a business plan and new management board for the Cajundome, is to be considered.

City Chief Administrative Officer and acting Cajundome director Glenn Weber told The Advertiser Wednesday "a more definite document" could be available within 10 days.

Once that's approved by Mayor Dud Lastrapes and USL President Ray Authement, it will be sent to the Attorney General's Office, then to the City Council and State Board of Trustees for briefings, Weber noted.

He, Lastrapes and Authement still predict a few months' waiting for final City Council action, but said they hope to have a new plan in the works around the Nov. 1 start of the City's new fiscal year.

Recreation and Leisure Services, which has an interim Cajundome management contract scheduled for City review last week, will apparently continue running day-to-day operations, meanwhile.

The two chief executives proposed a new Cajundome board, new management strategy and cap on civic center funding after a $44,000, independent study recommended such moves.

They, Weber, USL vice president James Caillier and City attorney Lee Leonard met for four hours Tuesday to plot the course.

"I think we've had agreement on just about everything. It's just a matter now of getting the wording just right," Lastrapes told The Advertiser Wednesday.

(See Dome, page 5)
Authement echoed the comment, saying he thinks “discussions have gone very, very well” and a mutually-acceptable document is “close.”

Both agree formation of a smaller, more powerful board than the current nine-member Cajundome advisory commission is the first step, and must be taken quickly.

They also agree it’s that board that should have responsibility for determining how and by whom the Dome can best be managed. Discussions from that point have centered on composition, duties and powers of the new board, as well as City/USL participation in Cajundome operations, Weber and Authement said.

The independent study also recommended that the two entities move closer to "shared responsibility" for financial support of the civic center.

Both Weber and Authement were hesitant to discuss dollar figures Wednesday, citing ongoing negotiations.

They did however, confirm, that a five-member management board is still contemplated and that such a group would be given a budget within which to run the Dome. "The word run will be all encompassing," meaning the new board will make policy decisions about daily Dome operations within the "business plan" and City/USL guidelines, Weber said.

He claimed the wording on finances will probably have "the City assume financial responsibility for any annual deficit up to $500,000, or the actual deficit - whichever is less."

USL will likely be expected to commit to better identifying blocks of time when it can free up the Dome for other money-making functions, help defray utility and other operating costs on 22 dates it has the bookings, he said.

Authement said acknowledgment of the study’s finding that the Cajundome is not primarily a convention center, and the university’s new ASAC conference affiliation in basketball, make it easier to arrive at an operating agreement.

Both facts ought to ease previous Cajundome scheduling conflicts and free up more dates for event facility, and show "good faith" in extending additional dollars, when available, to non-routine Dome maintenance, Weber said.

He claimed the City seeks no guaranteed lump sum from the university, since it already donated land for the Cajundome and thousands of dollars toward its $64 million construction. The City also gets a 33 percent share of concession sales during USL-hosted Cajundome functions.

"Anything additional gotten in actual dollars will be lagniappe," Weber commented.

The Attorney General’s Office is being contacted because a state university is involved, he said.

The U.S. Handball Association is headquartered at 930 N. Benton Ave. Tucson, AZ 85711.