OUR YEAR WITH THE CAJUNDOME

CITY OFFICIALS ARE CELEBRATING LOWER-THAN-EXPECTED DEFICITS. BUT IN TODAY'S FISCAL ENVIRONMENT, ONE COUNCILMAN THINKS ANY RED INK IS TOO MUCH

THE DOME'S FIRST YEAR

- It had a $356,000 deficit (less than projected)
- It hosted 238 events
- It generated $360,000 in taxes for the city, school board and state
- Only seven of 15 luxury suites were leased
- $50,000 people walked through the doors

WITH MOST OF THE FIGURES now in for the Cajundome's first year of operation, city officials are breathing a little sigh of relief and doing a little backslapping because the Dome's bottom line is better than expected.

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The Dome also generated a total of $360,000 in sales taxes for the city, school board and state from about $5.6 million in ticket sales, merchandise sales, food and drink concessions, parking fees and so on. It pumped an estimated additional $16.4 million to the local economy in "indirect" revenues to hotels, restaurants and shops from spending by visitors, according to industry calculations, somewhat high on first glance, that conventioners spend about $100 per person per day and show-goers spend about $30. The Dome generated an estimated $1.1 million in taxes.

Of course, if most of those "visitors" to the Dome are actually Lafayette residents who would be spending their money here anyway on some other form of entertainment, then the Dome's contribution to the local economy would be somewhat less than the figures seem to indicate. A couple spending money at the Cajundome on a date might have been at a movie theater a year ago, for example. But Cajundome spokeswoman Lisa Prejean says, "I think we're getting a fair amount of audience from outside Lafayette." The Dome is currently conducting a survey of visitors at "several events" to see where the audience is coming from, she adds.

And no doubt the availability of DOME continued on...