

Boat club case will go to trial, judge says

Jury expected to decide on eviction sought by Lansing

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Lansing's acceptance of property taxes from the Lansing Boat Club was one factor that prompted 54A District Judge Amy Krause to dismiss Tuesday the city's motion to settle an eviction complaint without a jury.

Krause cited other conflicting information involved in the case, including a February 2007 letter from the city's Parks and Recreation Department. While returning a \$50 rent check, the letter promised that a new lease was on the way.

The judge also refused the boat club's motion to dismiss the case.

WHAT'S NEXT

Lansing's 54A District Judge Amy Krause kept alive Tuesday an eviction complaint the city has filed against the Lansing Boat Club, which calls part of Grand River Park home despite not having signed a new lease since 1996. She scheduled a pretrial conference for July 1 and a trial for July 9.

Boat club members want a five-year lease.

Unable to reach an agreement with the club, the city began eviction proceedings earlier this year.

Although there are renewed possibilities of a settlement, club members said they're willing to see what happens with a jury if they cannot negotiate a five-year lease before the trial begins.

"We would like a five-year lease," said Delta Township club member Jeff Venn, speaking quietly outside the city attorney's office

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on the fifth floor of City Hall.

Lease negotiations appear likely to continue. City Attorney Brigham Smith and boat club attorney George Hamilton Foley spoke briefly after Tuesday's proceeding.

Smith said he's hoping to hear from Foley soon.

"The door is always open; the phone is always on," Smith said.

Foley has declined to comment outside of court proceedings.

Both sides proposed a variety of lease arrangements before the matter landed in court two months ago.

"It sounds like neither of us won at this juncture," Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero said after Krause's decision. "But our

position is the same. We're trying to get a win for the taxpayers, and that is defined as fair value in exchange for the use of the land."

Lansing's most recent lease proposal was a one-year lease with an annual \$500 rent.

The club has countered with a five-year lease and \$3,300 annual rent.

The boat club has proposed paying the \$3,300 rent with a \$500 communal fee to the city and slip fees of \$50 for city residents and \$100 for non-city residents.

Boat club officials have said their roster averages about 90 members.

At least a third live beyond city limits, officials said. Membership fees are \$100 a year.

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