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Boat Club members will appeal eviction

Evening update

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UPDATED 5:48 PM — A six-person jury has ruled in the favor of the city of Lansing in the city's lawsuit against the Lansing Boat Club.

The jury trial started this morning in 54A District Court. The city went to court to evict the boat club from Grand River Park because members have not signed a new lease since a 1996 agreement expired.

"I'm pleased," Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero said. "There's no question that the jury got it right. And I'm hopeful that the fighting is over and now we can focus on the possibility of building a future there."

He said he was not worried about the appeal that the boat club already is planning. "This was their best shot," he said.

Still, Bernero doesn't plan to kick the boat club out of Grand River Park. He said he's willing to let members and their boats stay until there's final resolution to the case.

Back in the winter, when city officials still couldn't convince the boat club to sign a new one-year lease, Bernero said he was interested in transforming the park into a full-fledged urban marina. This will give the city time to pursue those plans, he said. Boat club members said they are planning an appeal.

"I was very surprised," spokesman Jeff Venn said of the jury's verdict, which was returned after about 20 minutes of deliberations. "Really, that's about all I can say."

Former Lansing Mayor David Hollister testified earlier today that the city wanted the club to sign a one-year lease to stay in Grand River Park back in the 1990s when he was mayor.

"We were very interested in developing the river," Hollister said. "We had people looking at downtown development."

Hollister said the boat club was more interested in another five-year agreement. Boat club attorney George Hamilton Foley has contended the city never followed a lease provision mandating a 60-day notice prior to terminating the lease.
