

Boat club seeking dismissal of lawsuit

Hearing today is on eviction request by city of Lansing

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Despite a tentative return last week to lease negotiations between the city of Lansing and the Lansing Boat Club, as of Friday, both parties still were set to confront each other today in Lansing's 54A District Court.

The city would like to develop Grand River Park — part of which the club occupies — into a full-fledged urban marina and wants the flexibility to do so.

Unable to come to terms with the club, the city began eviction proceedings earlier this year.

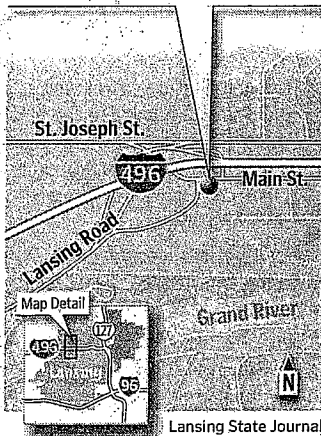
Boat club members — who haven't signed a lease in more than a decade — want the five-year leases they grew accustomed to over the decades and an accompanying sense of security.

Both sides proposed a variety of lease arrangements before the matter ended up in court in March.

City attorneys are confident

Lease dispute

The Lansing Boat Club occupies part of Grand River Park. Unable to come to terms with the club, the city began eviction proceedings earlier this year.



they'll prevail.

"The city's position is that the (old) lease ended on Dec. 31, 1996," Assistant City Attorney Don Kulhanek said.

"We remain confident in our position."

Yet there are signs that there could be some resolution.

Boat club member and Delta Township resident Jeff Venn said the club's attorney, George Hamilton Foley, called the city last week to renew negotiations.

Court: Boat club members repair dock as eviction case pending

CONTINUED FROM 1A

The city apparently responded with an e-mail that included a recent lease offer if extended for the club to remain at Grand River Park; its home since the 1940s.

"It doesn't show good intent on the part of the city," Venn said.

Recent offer from city

City Attorney Brigham Smith

said the city sent the most recent lease offer as a place to start with renewed negotiations. It entails a one-year lease with an annual \$500 rent.

While the club already has made a counter offer of a five-year lease and \$3,300 annual rent, Smith said five years is unacceptable.

The boat club's most recent lease was for five years and included a \$50 annual rent.

Foley declined to comment.

Today, they will debate various motions, including the boat club's request for dismissal of the case before District Court Judge Amy Krause.

Dismissal sought

Venn said the club hopes the judge will throw the case out and, with the judge's blessing, the parties could "turn around and start anew" lease negotiations.

Some City Council members

have said they would hate to see the boat club leave Grand River Park.

"I am still hoping we can come to some kind of agreement with them," Councilwoman Carol Wood said.

The council passed a resolution in March directing Mayor Virg Bernero and Smith to halt eviction proceedings, but the mayor vetoed that resolution.

Council members are pursuing a new ordinance that would

give the council power to review and approve municipal leases.

Most likely, council President Brian Jeffries said, it won't be ready for review until after the court case.

"Crazy" is how boat club Secretary Marilyn Wojack describes the situation.

Members have been returning to the park.

While they repair docks and remove debris from the river, their future at Grand River Park

What's next

As of Friday, attorneys for the city of Lansing and the Lansing Boat Club were scheduled for a 3 p.m. hearing today before 54A District Court Judge Amy Krause.

hangs in the balance.

"We take care of that park," Wojack said. "We deal with everything down there."

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