

Wednesday, April 8, 2009

City Council to discuss Cobo privately on Thursday

David Josar and Christina Stolarz / The Detroit News

Detroit -- City Council has just scheduled a special session for 11:30 a.m. Thursday to hold a private meeting to discuss its lawsuit against Mayor Kenneth Cockrel Jr., which, if successful, would kill plans to turn over Cobo Center to a regional authority and pave the way for \$288 million in renovations.

The meeting will be held shortly after one taking place by the Cobo Regional Authority, which is set to take over Cobo Center on April 20.

However, City Council, Cockrel and other leaders have expressed hope that the lawsuit is dropped and that the improvements can proceed.

Attorneys and their clients have been meeting together and privately for nearly two weeks with Wayne County Judge Isidore Torres, who was asked by City Council to block the transfer of Cobo.

Several attorneys met in Torres' chambers on Tuesday.

Council rejected turning over the facility to the authority last month, fearing the city would get too little for the facility and that too few jobs would go to Detroiters.

Cockrel then vetoed the decision and Council went to court, saying the veto was illegal.

One idea being floated to end the dispute is that the regional authority, whose five members must all be agreement on any decision, would lease the facility back to the city or make another decision that would placate Council into dropping its lawsuit.

The regional authority, which meets 8 a.m. Thursday, has not released its agenda.

Earlier, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano said the only scenario he sees settling the case is a "lease back agreement" similar to deals Detroit has with the Detroit Zoo and the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson agreed that's the best option, too.

djosar@detnews.com