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Sports authority protests bond on \$5 million property judgment

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The Arlington Sports Facility Development Authority should not have to post a bond to guarantee payment of a \$5 million judgment to landowners whose property was condemned to build The Ballpark in Arlington, city officials argued in court Monday.

The sports authority, a city-appointed board that oversees the ballpark, falls under a state law that exempts the state and municipalities from posting the bond, City Attorney Jay Doegey said after the hearing at a county court at law in Fort Worth.

But Glenn **Sodd**, the landowners' attorney, contended at the hearing that the sports authority isn't exempt from paying the bond. Mr. **Sodd** said it was ironic that the city argued at a recent trial that it shouldn't be held liable in the case because it was a separate entity from the sports authority.

The court should require the bond because it could take years for landowners to receive their money if the case is appealed as expected, Mr. **Sodd** said.

"They've told voters the Texas Rangers are paying for this," Mr. **Sodd** said, adding that he wondered who would pay the judgment if the team couldn't.

"We haven't received a penny, and they've been using our land for five years."

The court didn't rule on the bond Monday.

The issue of whether the authority should pay a bond was the latest in a court battle between property owners and the sports authority.

A Tarrant County jury ordered the sports authority to pay nearly \$5 million to the landowners after a two-week trial in a Tarrant County District Court in June. Landowners contended their property was worth much more than the \$800,000 the city paid when it condemned their property to use for parking lots.

The sports authority plans to appeal the judgment, arguing that the jury based its verdict on unaccepted offers to buy the property that should not have been admitted as evidence in the trial.

An appeal could take a year or more, Mr. Doegey said. If the ruling is upheld, the sports authority will have to pay interest on the \$5 million.

City officials have said the Rangers may have to pay some of the acquisition money. The Rangers lease the land from the sports authority and use most of it for parking lots.

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