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## Stadium authority hopes land sells for half its initial offer

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ARLINGTON - The stadium authority hopes to pay about half what it originally offered for five parcels of land for the Texas Rangers ballpark project, freeing about \$1.2 million for other amenities, officials said.

The lower price, set by an appraiser hired by the city for condemnation proceedings, is based on what a real estate broker paid for other land the authority later bought from him for the project. The Arlington Sports Facilities Development Authority offered about \$2.50 per square foot for 22.53 acres planned for parking.

Attorneys for the three property owners dispute the lower appraisal and have filed for a jury trial to determine what the stadium authority will pay.

"I understand their position, and I think they understand ours," said Glenn **Sodd**, an attorney representing the three property owners. "That's what makes for horse races and fistfights."

If the authority wins, the money saved will be spent on the amenities of the \$165 million project, which includes a river walk with shops and restaurants, an amphitheater, a hall of fame, a learning center and a youth baseball park, officials said. Last year, voters approved a half-cent sales tax increase to pay for \$135 million of the project.

Exactly where the savings would go won't be known, however, until the authority completes its plans and budgets for the ballpark and the extras, authority President Bill Snider said.

At the heart of the dispute is the appraisal by Tom Hanes of Arlington. Hanes used two pieces of land bought for the Rangers project in judging that values have dropped by half.

But attorneys for the property owners point to state law, which says a public entity can't buy property using the threat of condemnation and then use those purchases to justify lower land prices.

If the county court decides that there was no threat of condemnation during the sales, the transactions could be used in the appraisal. If the court decides that a threat of condemnation was made and the sales were influenced by the stadium project, the transactions won't be allowed in the appraisal, attorneys and appraisers said.

Mike Reilly, who manages a family trust that owns a small part of the Rangers, used his real estate company, Stallion Inc., to buy the two pieces of land and then transferred them to the authority.

Because Reilly didn't work directly for the authority, there was no threat of condemnation, said Hanes and Assistant City Attorney Jeanene McIntyre.

Reilly said he didn't mention condemnation in either purchase.

Nancy Chapa, who negotiated the sale of 9.2 acres for Bonnet Resources, said she approached Reilly. Chapa initially asked for more than \$1 million but finally sold the land

for \$500,940.

Chapa said she knew that the land was for the ballpark but wasn't influenced by that. "I thought the price we got was more than anyone else would have paid."

But the property owners' attorneys contend that because Reilly is known to be handling land deals for the project, there could have been a perceived threat of condemnation.

"If he provided it with the sole intent of flipping it to the city and was using city money, then that does not even come close to being right," said attorney Richard Laurin, who represents a lien holder on one of the properties.

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