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Fee waiver for arena urged

A proposal before the Louisville Metro Council would exempt the operators of the KFC Yum! Center from paying to be part of a special downtown district.

The ordinance, sponsored by council President Jim King, comes as the Louisville Arena Authority and the Louisville Downtown Management District are engaged in a new quarrel over more than \$200,000 in fees.

King, who serves as a nonvoting arena authority member, said his measure is a "common-sense solution to what has become a lengthy dispute."

While the arena authority is exempt from property taxes, it is required by law to make payments based on the arena's assessed value to the Louisville Downtown Management District.

But the arena authority, in protesting a \$211,464 assessment for 2011, argued in a December letter obtained under Kentucky's open records laws that it should be exempt because city law bans the assessments on properties owned or used by government entities. The arena authority is an "agency of the state," the letter states.

Records from the Jefferson County sheriff's office show the authority owes more than \$222,000 because the original amount

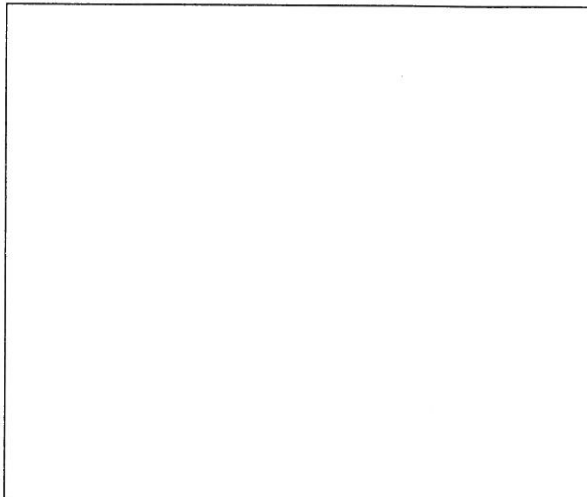
wasn't paid by Jan. 30.

The downtown management district is authorized under state law, and its members are appointed by the mayor. City statutes allow the agency to collect money based on the assessed value of property within its boundaries. The district uses the fees for services such as general cleaning, maintenance, marketing and studies to improve downtown.

Harold Workman, the arena authority's executive director and president of the Kentucky State Fair Board, which operates the KFC Yum! Center, said arena staff already performs some of the management district's services. Arena officials would prefer to pay a negotiated fee similar to the fair board's arrangement for the Kentucky International Convention Center, he said.

Still, the arena authority agreed to pay \$34,154 to settle a dispute over its assessment from 2010. Workman said the agreement isn't an admission that it owes

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the fees.

King's measure is to be introduced today. It would be retroactive and apply to fiscal 2012, which started July 1 .

Asked about the proposal, Deb DeLor, the downtown management district's executive director, said, "We expect that properties w ithin our district would pay consistent with the ordinance as it stands right now."

DeLor said the opening of the 22,000-seat arena at Second and Main streets has resulted in a 10 percent increase in downtown visitors and higher during peak times, such as college basketball season. The district estimates the arena brought more than 1 million people downtown during the building's first year.

As a result, she said, many of the district's services also increased. DeLor said her agency is in talks with arena officials about the appeal.

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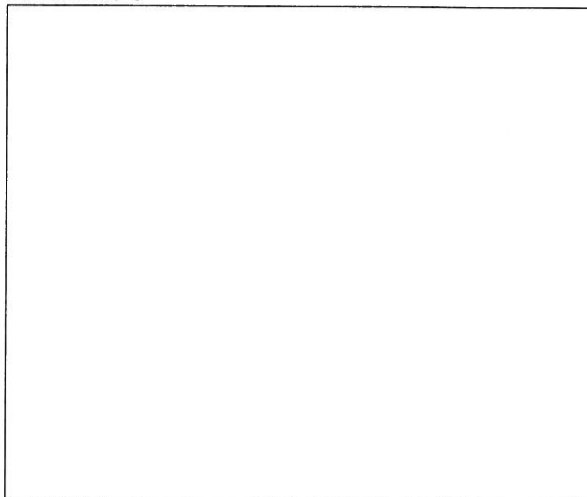
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