

# Vote is delayed on Love Field concessions

Council will consider other options for contracts in August

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The most divisive issue to hit the Dallas City Council in years was pushed down the road Wednesday without public debate or discussion.

A scheduled vote on two multimillion-dollar no-bid concessions contracts at Love Field threatened to divide the council along racial lines.

Instead, Mayor Tom Leppert called the council into a brief recess just before the vote was to be taken.

Council members used the 10-minute break to gather in clusters around the horseshoe and hold private discussions on how to proceed. Senior members of the city staff and longtime Love Field concessionaire Gilbert Aranza joined them in the conversations.

When the break ended, Leppert abruptly announced that the council wouldn't hear any speakers on the issue.

"What we're going to ask the staff to do is to come in with additional options," Leppert said. "We've got one option on the table. We think there are other options that have to be [considered]. One of those that has received some discussion is to have an option where it's got an open bid ... There may very well be other options."

When the council comes back in August, the staff will present those options, Leppert said. The council will consider



MICHAEL AINSWORTH/Staff Photographer

**Mayor Tom Leppert** (center) spoke to Mayor Pro Tem Dwaine Caraway during a break Wednesday. Leppert called the council into a recess just before a vote on Love Field concession contracts; after the break, he said the vote was delayed.

them and take a vote as soon as its first voting meeting in August.

The delay appeared to be a compromise that a group of council members reached late Tuesday or early Wednesday.

Mayor Pro Tem Dwaine Caraway confirmed as much.

"That's why I have a head-

ache. I didn't sleep last night for trying to get this thing to some kind of sanity," he said.

The council was set to vote Wednesday on two contracts that would have given — without a competitive bid — more than half the concessions space at a renovated Love Field to two firms that have been at the air-

port since 1996. The remaining space would be opened to bidding.

The Star Concessions food and beverage firm is owned by Aranza, a longtime donor to council campaigns. The retail concessions firm, Hudson Retail Dallas, is owned in part by state Rep. Helen Giddings, D-

Dallas, and a blind trust that controls the assets of U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, D-Dallas.

Aranza said that he looks forward to August and was not disappointed by the deferral.

A spokesman for Hudson said in a prepared statement that the company "will continue



**ANGELA HUNT** asked for the Love Field vote to be delayed.

to follow the process that the council has established and will continue to work with council members and the city staff."

Since April when Leppert publicly raised concerns about the no-bid contracts, the council has been on a collision course.

White council members have largely coalesced around Leppert's call to open all concessions space at Love Field to competitive bidding.

Black and Hispanic council members have insisted that the council support the staff recommendation to grant the deals to Star and Hudson.

Council member Angela Hunt, who emerged as the swing vote on the deals, has asked her colleagues to delay the vote so she could study the contracts and the mayor's concern.

Hunt said she didn't know what Wednesday's outcome would be until Leppert approached her during the morning meeting.

"The mayor came up to me and proposed what he ended up doing," she said. "This is a good outcome, and it will get all the options on the table."

The delay will give the council a final chance to reach some decision that doesn't break along racial lines, and that is important, Hunt said.

"What is even more important than common ground though, is making sure we have the best deal for Love Field," she said.