

Fate Of Springs Speedway In Judge's Hands

Author : JULIET ROWAN-NZ Herald

(www.nzherald.co.nz) The future of Auckland's speedway is in the hands of the court after negotiations between the speedway promoter and residents opposed to noise levels broke down yesterday.

Springs Promotions made a hurried application to the Environment Court late yesterday afternoon, asking that it allow racing to continue at Western Springs Stadium.

The court is expected to hear the application today.

If it rejects the request that an interim judgment forcing the speedway to comply with an 85-decibel noise limit be suspended, a trans-tasman meeting on Boxing Day at the stadium will be cancelled.

The Auckland City Council is supporting Springs Promotions' application to the court.

Speedway promoter Dave Stewart says the limit is unworkable. He wants it raised to at least 90 decibels, saying this is the lowest limit possible to successfully run racing.

The situation came to a head yesterday when the residents' association opposed to noise levels refused to budge on the limit.

The association got the interim judgment from the Environment Court earlier this month, forcing the speedway to comply with the 85-decibel limit set out in the council's District Plan.

The residents refused to attend a third round of talks scheduled for yesterday and they were called off.

The council said it wanted the 75-year-old speedway to continue.

Deputy mayor Bruce Hucker, who has brokered the negotiations between the two sides, said the speedway had tried to make concessions but the residents were less flexible.

He said the residents agreed to the noise limit for three races per meeting in January exceeding 85 decibels but rising no higher than 90 decibels while the speedway worked out how to reduce noise levels.

But they would not agree to those terms for the remainder of the speedway season until March, he said.

Dr Hucker said the council was hopeful the Environment Court would rule in favour of the speedway because it should be allowed to continue while a long-term solution to the noise problem was found.

The council had made every effort to see the issue from both sides.

Mr Stewart hoped the court would acknowledge the difficulty the speedway faced in complying with 85 decibels.

Four drivers from Australia were due to arrive in Auckland on Christmas Day for the meeting on Boxing Day.

Mr Stewart said Springs Promotions had spent tens of thousands of dollars on their plane tickets and shipping their cars and other gear to New Zealand.

The Springs Stadium Residents Association last night laid the blame squarely with the council.

"The reason speedway has been disrupted this season starts and finishes with Auckland City Council," it said in a statement.

The association was angry the council was taking the speedway's side.

"[The council] will now move to permanently quash the community's rights to challenge what are acceptable and healthy noise levels at Western Springs speedway," the statement said.

The speedway should be able to stay within 85 decibels, it said.