

Civic center finance bill gains step

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PIERRE — Rapid City gained another step Thursday night in its quest for an auditorium-civic center complex when the House Local Government Committee voted 12 to 1 to send a bill to the floor for debate.

The measure in question is Senate Bill 228, authored by Sen. Charles Donnelly, which would allow municipalities of 20,000 or more population to enter into long term-leases for the acquisition of community facilities.

In Pierre to present testimony to the committee were James Olson, special city attorney; Paul Ness, council president; Leonard Swanson, director of public works; Don White, vice president of the chamber of commerce, and Ron Campbell, banker. Also discussing the issue was the bill's author.

The measure would allow a municipality to organize a non-profit group which would have the authority to sell revenue bonds and lease the facility to the city for a period not to exceed 20 years.

Olson told the committee the bill, if enacted, would provide

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the city with an alternate means of financing for an auditorium or civic center without going to a vote of the people for revenue or general obligation bonds.

Rapid City, the committee was told, is ready to move forward if the bill is passed, in a similar manner as was done to build an addition to the airport terminal building, the airport federal agencies building, and the new library building.

Olson told the committee that the people still retain the right of referral to a vote.

Swanson said the city is moving into the field of urban renewal and the civic center-auditorium complex will be the first step to remove a blighted area.

White and Campbell assured the local government committee the city business community is back of the project and urges passage of the measure.

While the committee questioned the advisability of passing "special interest legislation," Chairman Walter D. Miller, R-New Underwood, reminded that it is done many times and said he would not like to see this legislation defeated.

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