

TOM SCHECK: Hennepin County and Minneapolis officials say they were on the outside looking in when the final stadium legislation passed the legislature and was signed by the governor in May. They had pushed lawmakers to allow counties to compete for a stadium, but the bill only gives municipalities the right to bid on a ballpark, which provides an edge to Saint Paul. Lawmakers were under pressure to pass some sort of stadium legislation because Major League Baseball targeted the Twins for elimination last fall.

But suddenly, it looks like they may be able to take another look at the issue next session. The Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission won a court injunction to keep the Twins playing this season and may also delay contraction for another year if the settlement is approved. That has Hennepin County board chair Mike Opat calling on state lawmakers to take another look at the bill and cheering against Saint Paul's stadium efforts.

MIKE OPAT: I want the best outcome, and I think that's here. So I don't make it my business to wish ill on people. I know a lot of people are interested in having it happen there. But am I going to be disappointed if they can't reach an agreement? No, I'm not going to be because I think the right answer is in Hennepin County.

TOM SCHECK: Saint Paul officials say they're moving ahead with their stadium plans and are negotiating with the Twins. Mayor Randy Kelly said he won't hold a referendum on a new \$330 million ballpark unless he has a commitment from the Twins that the team will only negotiate with Saint Paul. The bill requires a referendum vote by September 30th.

Twins president Jerry Bell was unavailable to comment for this report but has said the team will work with the current ballpark bill. Senator Dean Johnson says he isn't planning on revisiting the ballpark bill during next year's session. The Willmar-DFLer is the author of the Senate version of the stadium financing bill. He says Minneapolis has the ability to hold a referendum this year to lift a \$10 million cap on stadium spending. He says the city should move forward if officials want to keep the Twins in Minneapolis.

DEAN JOHNSON: I am sure there will be some discussions and people asking for changes. But generally, I think we should resist changes at this point in time. They'll have to be very strong and compelling arguments to make changes in the bill.

TOM SCHECK: Republican House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty says there's a possibility lawmakers might reconsider the bill, especially if a referendum doesn't pass this year. Pawlenty is seeking the Republican endorsement for governor and voted against the ballpark bill. He says lawmakers might try to include Hennepin County in a future ballpark bill if they tax food and beverages county wide.

TIM PAWLENTY: So if Hennepin County wants to be a player, I say let's welcome them to the table. But let's only authorize them then to act on behalf of Hennepin County. The story behind the story here is that they're trying to use Hennepin County referendum as a way to bootstrap 80% of the tax burden into the city of Minneapolis. And I don't think that's fair.

TOM SCHECK: Princeton University professor Mike Danielson says stadium experiences elsewhere suggests Minneapolis and Hennepin County haven't lost their chance at a new Twins ballpark. The author of *Home Team-- Professional Sports and the American Metropolis* says no one should ever consider ballpark legislation final until the money is spent and digging begins.

MICHAEL DANIELSON: Until you're in those stages in most jurisdictions, whether it be a city or county or a state, in other words, until you've got the authority, you've raised the money, you've picked the site, you've designed the stadium, you've broken ground, nothing is settled.

TOM SCHECK: Ballpark subsidy opponents say they're gearing up to defeat stadium proposals at the polls this September. Progressive Minnesota's Dan McGrath says he expects to wage a grassroots campaign against any stadium proposal.

DAN MCGRATH: Legislators are not going to sleep easily knowing this is settled until voters sign off on it. And of course, that's been the biggest issue. Major League Baseball and the Twins have had literally tens of millions of dollars to spend on lobbying. Obviously, they've been able to wear down the legislature and get a victory there. The case hasn't been true with voters.

TOM SCHECK: McGrath says Progressive Minnesota will also make the stadium an issue in the November election by pointing out which state lawmakers voted for and against the ballpark bill. I'm Tom Scheck, Minnesota Public Radio.