

Sports authority OKs \$4.4 mil for game bid

Craig Harris - Mar. 13, 2009 12:00 AM
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As part of a business expense to land the 2013 Super Bowl, the Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority unanimously agreed Thursday to give the NFL nearly \$4.4 million to bring the title game back to University of Phoenix Stadium.

The money will come from sales taxes generated from tickets, merchandise and concessions on game day and from the NFL Experience, a carnival-like event for fans. Surrendering that income has become common in Super Bowl bids, according to sports-authority officials.

"It's just part of having the Super Bowl," said Jerry Walker, chairman of the nine-member authority board. "They are not strong-arming you, but that's the way it's set up."

The authority in 2008 gave the NFL \$3.4 million as part of the contract for hosting Super Bowl XLII in Glendale. That event generated an estimated \$501 million economic impact for the Valley, according to the W.P. Carey MBA Sports Business program at Arizona State University.

Bob Sullivan, Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee president, said the vote was vital to make a competitive bid to NFL owners, who will decide in May who gets the 2013 Super Bowl and the potential financial windfall.

"The bid is the bid. If you want the game, you have to submit the bid the way they ask you to submit it," Sullivan said. "It's like being at the high-school dance, and you don't know how to dance. Well, you won't get asked to dance."

Sullivan said that, without the sales-tax incentive going to the NFL, Arizona would have a "big deficiency" in its bid. Arizona is vying with New Orleans and Miami for the Feb. 3, 2013, game. The NFL confirmed Thursday that it's a Super Bowl requirement that the league not pay sales taxes.

Arizona, which also hosted Super Bowl XXX in 1996 at Sun Devil Stadium, lost the 2011 game to Dallas and the 2012 game to Indianapolis by one vote.

Sullivan said his committee feels good about its chances, and he was at the most recent Super Bowl in Tampa, gauging interest from owners about coming back to Arizona.

"Super Bowl 42 was seen as a huge success not only from the community but by the NFL," Sullivan said. "We think we are uniquely situated for another Super Bowl. We have shown twice we were ready to host the world's greatest sporting event."

Sullivan, however, said Arizona has stiff competition because New Orleans has hosted nine Super Bowls and Miami will have hosted 10 Super Bowls after next year's game.

He added that preliminary bids must be submitted to NFL headquarters in New York by April 1 and that final bids must be turned in by May 1.

