

The fair board's naming rights agreement with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation will be revisited Thursday, but a key provision to end live racing at Fair Meadows is not expected to be up for reconsideration. Tulsa County Commissioner Fred Perry said Friday that the fairgrounds would release a statement Monday with more specifics on an agenda item addressing the issue at the fair board's Thursday meeting. Claremore attorney Mark Ramsey, hired by the quarter horse and thoroughbred racing associations to look into the possibility of suing the fair board over its decision to end live racing, said he understood that there is a change proposed in the agreement that deals with court jurisdiction in the event of a legal dispute between the tribe and the fairgrounds. Ramsey said he would be shocked if the fair board was considering a change in its position on live racing. Without a license to hold live races, Fair Meadows will not receive the \$2 million a year it was receiving from the Muscogee (Creek), Osage and Cherokee tribes in lieu of having gaming machines. The tribes will also not have to continue paying into a fund that went to the horse racing purses statewide. The purse fund averaged \$6.8 million a year between 2007 and 2011. Debbie Schauf, executive director of the Oklahoma Quarter Horse Racing Association, said the group wants to know how the fair board and commissioners came to make the deal with the tribe for naming rights on the Expo Square events center that included the cessation of live racing. "There was no mention in the agenda or notice that it was being considered or discussed, yet they voted unanimously in about two seconds to do that with no discussion," she said. "We don't think they can quit paying purse money." Ramsey is also pursuing an extensive open records request to the fair board and commissioners related to the naming rights agreement. Ramsey said that the fair board had responded to several requests and others were still pending. The county commissioners, who also sit on the fair board, had not responded, he said. Fair Meadows Director Ron Shotts said he couldn't discuss plans at the track

property because of the potential for a lawsuit. He did confirm that the simulcast facility would close after the end of the year. Perry told the Tulsa Business Journal in an online report Thursday: "It came to the attorneys' attention that there was some key language missing from the agreement." Later in the story, Perry said the missing language had to do with sovereign immunity. But after speaking with the Tulsa Business Journal, Perry said Friday that he had been advised not to comment further by the fair board's legal counsel Tom Hilborne. Perry did not return repeated phone calls Thursday night from the Tulsa World. Meanwhile, state Rep. Don Armes, R-Faxon, renewed his call Friday for Gov. Mary Fallin to help remedy the expected job losses from the loss of live horse races. "The state's two largest horse organizations have presented me with compelling evidence that this decision is not only a violation of the gaming compact, but a potentially devastating loss of jobs in the agricultural sector of the Oklahoma economy," he said in a letter to the governor. In a prepared statement, Fallin spokesman Alex Weintz said: "Governor Fallin has been contacted by multiple stakeholders concerned about the future of Fair Meadows Racetrack. She has asked her staff to look into the events surrounding its closing to ensure that proper measures were taken to guarantee transparency." Creek Nation Speaker Sam Alexander said that the fairgrounds' departure from the live race business and the tribes' end to subsidizing it is just economics. "The only people upset seem to be the horse racing people," Alexander said. "They're a failed industry. I don't mean to be mean or disrespectful, but horse racing hasn't been a viable entertainment option for 10 years or longer." The tribe will pay the fairgrounds \$120,000 a month - or \$1.44 million a year - to put its name on the 448,400-square-foot event center currently called the QuikTrip Center as part of an agreement to end live racing at the Fair Meadows Racetrack. The exposition center will be renamed the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Center. The new contract also gives the Creek Nation the right over the next two years to

propose a plan for development of the land now occupied by old Drillers Stadium.

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