



## Macomb County wins ruling

Freedom Hill venue must share fees

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Operators of Freedom Hill Amphitheater in Sterling Heights were dealt a financial blow when a federal judge ruled earlier this month that Macomb County was entitled to a share of revenue from ticket sales and event parking, as agreed to in the contract.

The amount Hillside Productions Inc., which runs the concert venue in the county-owned Freedom Hill County Park, will have to pay as a result of the ruling hasn't been determined yet.

U.S. District Court Judge Robert Cleland ruled June 14 that Hillside had to honor the contract's provisions and allowed for damages to be determined at a later date. Officials from Hillside Productions said when the suit was filed that giving the county the revenue it was requesting could cost millions of dollars and had the potential to shut down the venue.

Now, the company has to furnish receipts to determine just how much it owes the county in back revenue since 2001. The court maintained contract provisions on joint site maintenance and property tax payments for Hillside.

One of the agreement's provisions was that Hillside would receive 75% of revenues from parking and the county would receive 25%, or a minimum of \$125,000 per year.

The relationship between Hillside Productions, Macomb County and the city of Sterling Heights has been tenuous since the operating agreement was signed in 1999. Concerns have ranged from residents disliking the noise brought to the area to allegations that the county was conspiring to get Hillside to close the amphitheater.

Hillside Productions filed a \$250-million lawsuit in April 2006 after the company said the county interfered with an agreement it had with Palace Sports and Entertainment and forced the county into current financial arrangements.

The lawsuit dismissed a major claim, according to a statement from the Macomb County Office of Public Affairs, in which Hillside claimed it was forced under duress to enter into a contract with Macomb County to share revenue from multiple sources.

Calls to Hank Riberas, spokesman for Hillside, and Cindy Victor, the lead attorney representing Hillside, weren't returned Monday.

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