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# Coyotes deal falls through; potential buyer Jamison misses deadline

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**By Paul Giblin**  
 The Republic | azcentral.com  
 Fri Feb 1, 2013 8:59 AM

Veteran sports executive Greg Jamison failed to purchase the Phoenix Coyotes on Thursday, but he and other suitors will continue efforts to buy the National Hockey League team in coming weeks, according to multiple sources.

"We will not be able to complete our purchase of the Phoenix Coyotes today in time to meet our deadline with the city of Glendale," Jamison said in a prepared statement released Thursday night.

"However, our journey to purchase the Coyotes will continue. We realize this will require additional conversations with the city of Glendale and the NHL. We still believe we can reach an agreement that satisfies everyone. We hope negotiations with the city proceed as smoothly as possible, as everyone involved wants the Coyotes to

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remain in Arizona.”

Thursday was key because it was the last day Jamison could have purchased the team from the NHL to meet a clause in a lucrative contract with Glendale to manage Jobing.com Arena.

Jamison, and potentially others, are free to negotiate a new deal with the city, but it's doubtful city officials will offer the same terms.

The 20-year agreement would have paid Jamison an average of \$15 million a year to run the city-owned facility.

Four of the seven members on the City Council when the Jamison deal was approved have since left office.

The blown deadline was a disappointment to fans and players who have followed the ownership puzzle for nearly four years.

“I've only been a part of it for the last year or so, but for guys that it's been four years now, obviously it's a frustrating time,” Coyotes goalie Mike Smith said. “It's something we can't really solve, otherwise we'd buy the team if we could.”

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly told The Arizona Republic that regardless of Thursday's deadline with the city, “The Coyotes will still be playing here tomorrow and our objectives will remain the same.”

The NHL has sought a buyer to keep the Coyotes in Glendale since taking ownership of the team in a U.S. Bankruptcy Court auction in fall 2009.

Daly, in a radio interview on Hockey Night in Canada, maintained his commitment to Glendale, but acknowledged other cities could come into play.

“We're closer to executing an alternative (plan) right now than we were five months ago,” he said.

Municipalities without NHL teams, including Seattle, Quebec City and Oklahoma City have been monitoring the situation in hopes that the franchise goes adrift from its desert home.

Jamison, a former president and CEO of the San Jose Sharks, has sought to buy the team since 2011.

City Councilman Gary Sherwood told The Republic that he understood Jamison and NHL officials discussed several options to assemble an ownership group during just the past two weeks.

During that time, a major new investor emerged, but the new investor demanded a controlling interest, which Jamison was reluctant to cede. Jamison instead tried to press on with a larger collection of smaller investors, but the group failed to jell before the city's deadline.

Sherwood said Jamison and NHL officials kept in contact with City Attorney Craig Tindall during that period.

The councilman declined to identify the deep-pocketed investor, but said he expects the investor to move forward without Jamison in a separate attempt to buy the team.

“There is a suitor that's been vetted through the National Hockey League, that's been OK'd by the National Hockey League, that has money,” Sherwood said.

Tindall said Sherwood's account of the developments was consistent with his knowledge.

Glendale Mayor Jerry Weiers said NHL commissioner Gary Bettman assured him that if Jamison's efforts fell short, the NHL was dedicated to keeping the team in Glendale.

Weiers said the council is prepared to work with the NHL, Jamison or other potential buyers on a new arrangement for the arena.

However, the terms of any new deal will be different.

“If we can keep the Coyotes here and have a successful team and have people spending money, certainly I'd want that, but not with the deal that was made with the previous council,” Weiers said.

Weiers said that he was contacted Wednesday night by representatives of two separate groups interested in buying the Coyotes and keeping the team in Glendale if Jamison fails to purchase the team. The mayor declined to identify the two groups.

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He said he could not immediately assess the genuineness of the apparent new suitors.

Fans are frustrated, said Heather Schroeder, 43, president of the Phoenix Coyotes Booster Club.

"It would be so nice to be a regular hockey fan instead of having to know all the ins and outs of all these lease agreements, she said.

Republic reporter Sarah McLellan contributed to this article.

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