

Everything's lined up for Vikings camp — except the Vikings

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MANKATO — The decision on training camp in Mankato should come Monday — maybe.

Back in June, with the National Football League lockout threatening the start of training camp, Minnesota Vikings officials announced they would make a decision on where to hold camp by July 18.

But with news that players and owners are nearing an agreement and may have a tentative deal in place by Tuesday — with ratification by players and owners possible by Thursday — the Vikings' stance may be softening.

Reports now indicate the Vikings may delay their decision if a tentative agreement is in place by the Monday deadline.

In spite of all the speculation, the Minnesota State University campus is pretty much ready for camp to kick off.

The residence halls have been prepped for players. Myers Fieldhouse is ready for team training sessions and the fields are ready for practice.

All that's needed now, said MSU spokesman Michael Cooper, is for the players to arrive.

"We are all ready for them to move in," he said. "We're still optimistic, but it's a little bit frustrating because the decision is entirely out of our hands."

At the Greater Mankato Convention and Visitors Bureau, they're hoping for the best: a business-as-usual training camp full of plenty of fans at the field and "No Vacancy" signs at hotels.

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CAMP: Organizers remain optimistic

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Larissa Mrozek, the group's senior sales director, said it looks better for training camp to be a go than it did a week ago.

"Our take right now is that we're cautiously optimistic," Mrozek said. "It's looking more and more promising, and today (with the news of progress in talks to end the NFL lockout), we're feeling a little better about the whole thing."

She said they've gotten a few calls from out-of-towners wondering whether training camp will be a go, but "not as many as I would have thought," Mrozek said.

In keeping tabs on the deal, Mrozek said they've been in contact with sources at MSU, who have said they feel positive about the chances of training camp proceeding as usual.

The Vikings are one of 15 NFL teams that hold training camp on the road, away from their team headquarters. For those cities, training camps are big business and Mankato is no different.

When River Falls, Wis., lost Kansas City Chiefs training camp in 2005, the city estimated its losses at \$1.4 million. The Rural Policy Institute at Northern Arizona University estimates that Arizona Cardinals training camp brought \$7 million in economic impact to Flagstaff and the university last year. In Mankato, more than 60,000-70,000 camp visitors are estimated to generate about \$5 million to \$6 million in local economic impact. MSU's training camp contract expires after this summer.

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