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Attempt to stall bridge fails

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One last attempt to halt design plans for one of the city's controversial pedestrian bridges came up empty again Monday, paving the way for the city to sign a contract with a world-renowned architect.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart and three other aldermen sought to have the deal put on hold while city staff looked into whether the city was breaching provincial guidelines by negotiating directly with one architect instead of having an open design competition.

But she was told any intervention she wanted to make wouldn't be done in time because the city is around a week away from signing a contract with European architect Santiago Calatrava.

"What they're going to do is work with Calatrava to get this contract signed real quickly, which I have real concerns with," said Colley-Urquhart, who attempted to derail the talks along with aldermen Andre Chabot, Joe Connelly and Ric McIver.

The design contract with Calatrava comes out of the \$25 million city council approved in September for the design of two new bridges over the Bow River and construction of one of them.

The move became a lightning rod for criticism of city spending and drew the ire of residents protesting property tax increases.

Even though the four aldermen said the move to only negotiate directly with Calatrava could jeopardize provincial funding, the province has already signed off on the project.

The first bridge, to the west of Prince's Island, is slated to be finished around 2011.

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