

Group to seek early transfer of base property 4-24-07

BY AARON BRAND
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The local redevelopment authority will negotiate directly with the Army for early transfer of local ammunition plant land and some acreage at Red River Army Depot.

The Red River Redevelopment Authority's executive director, Duane Lavery, said Monday although there's no agreement

yet with Day & Zimmermann, RRRRA will go ahead and seek an early transfer of base property slated to be closed or realigned at RRAD and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant.

Lavery discussed the plans during a special meeting of the board of directors.

The board unanimously approved its support for the RRRRA to seek an early transfer

agreement with the Army for excess property at Red River and Lone Star.

Officials say there are number of issues to be ironed out in the negotiations, including the amount of acreage needed by D&Z to continue work at the Lone Star property, road access, land ownership and control of timber.

Lavery said moving forward

with early transfer negotiations doesn't threaten the negotiations with D&Z.

He said an agreement with D&Z can still be reached down the road.

"As for the BRAC action, though, we're going directly to the Army to pursue all of the property," Lavery said.

He said verbal and written agreements had been reached

since January but D&Z backed out of those agreements.

Now, the redevelopment authority has to go forward if it wants to achieve an early transfer of property during this year by late September, he said.

In a telephone interview, Jerry Smith, vice president and general manager of D&Z's Texarkana operations, said an agreement

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was reached in principle but it wasn't binding. He said more details need to be worked out, particularly in terms of the Army.

"Negotiations have been ongoing for however long it's been ongoing. We've been going back and forth with meetings with the LRA and negotiating our position with what we need for acreage to make a business case," said Smith.

Both he and Lavery expressed optimism that an agreement can still be reached to keep D&Z and its jobs here in Texarkana.

"As far as I know, we're still a part of their plan ... I don't see anything different," said Smith, adding he didn't want to discuss details of the agreement negotiations.

But he did say D&Z prefers to

buy the land they need rather than lease property.

"We want to control our own destiny," said Smith, adding he doesn't see any reason why a deal can't be done this year to achieve early transfer.

Lavery said one issue revolves around the D&Z footprint, noting the redevelopment authority wants to see more justification for the acreage needed. He added that D&Z's goal is also to keep the defense contractor's jobs here in Texarkana.

What's next?

Lavery said an agreement must now be reached with the Army on a disposition strategy for the property. The surplus property was determined last May to be about 15,500 acres at Lone Star and 3,855 acres at Red River.

"Once the disposition strategy's done, a lot of this starts moving very quickly," said Lavery.

But he said a deadline of April 10 has passed, necessitating the

move to go on with early transfer.

That deadline was set through a March agreement between a community leadership team and the Pentagon to have a deal with D&Z done by April, in addition to some further Pentagon review of property transfer, he said.

Lavery said once a property plan is finalized and documents are ready, then a reuse plan can be presented to the public through public meetings and approval can ultimately be sought from the board.

At the public meetings, local citizens will be able to voice their opinions and help impact the final reuse plan, he said.

Bowie County Judge James Carlow and John Jarvis, former Texarkana, Texas, mayor and current board chairman of the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce, have been working with the Pentagon on the disposition plan, said Lavery.