Airport budget approved

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Lafayette Regional Airport commissioners approved the facility's $6.5 million budget Thursday, but a motion to subject some line items to further review failed for lack of a second.

"There are some line items that I feel we could cut out or reduce," said commissioner Ron LeBlanc, presenting a list of those items to other commissioners. "I think we should approve the budget, but have the commission or a finance committee appointed by the commission go back and look at some of these items before the money is actually spent."

Finance committee chairman Herb Simmons said he had not seen the list of line items LeBlanc presented.

"As chairman of the finance committee, I really feel I should have at least had the opportunity to see this," he said.

The commission's legal counsel suggested handling the matter in two motions, one to approve the budget and one to require further review of the listed line items before they are expended.

Simmons' motion to approve the budget passed with LeBlanc's second, but Simmons did not second a subsequent motion by LeBlanc to have the list of items reviewed by the commission before they are expended. Therefore, LeBlanc's motion died without approval.

Only three of four commissioners were present, since chairman Billy Jacob was absent because of illness. Vice chairman Marilyn Tarpy led the meeting.

Among the line items LeBlanc questioned were $7,169 in accrued administrative vacation pay, which he suggested be reduced to zero; $18,000 for office supplies, reduced to $17,000; ...
$30,000 travel/public relations, reduced to $24,000;
$80,000 for contingency, reduced to $60,000;
$34,000 for architect reduced to $11,000;
$1.1 million for terminal construction reduced to $350,000; and
$95,000 for Exciting Access and Interior Art plans, reduced to $40,000. The Exciting Access funds were for planning and construction of landscaping and other items along ingress and egress routes near the airport.

The largest of LeBlanc’s proposed reductions, the $773,000 subtracted from architect’s and terminal construction fees, was tied in with the potential sale of airport property to Dependable Dodge.

The sale has been in the works for over a year, and is now tied up in court action to resolve ambiguous wording in lease documents between the commission and Dependable Dodge.

The 1989 budget, though, lists $850,000 in revenue from the sale. The 1988 budget also listed the land sale as a revenue source, but the sale was never completed and funds never materialized.

LeBlanc’s proposal appeared to offer a contingency plan, in case the sale doesn’t go through. If that turns out to be the case, his proposal noted, only $583,000 would still be available for terminal renovation — not enough to cover the budgeted renovation expenditures, unless his proposed reductions were applied.

LeBlanc’s proposal represented a savings of either $215,149 or $988,149, depending on whether the Dependable Dodge monies are forthcoming.

Vice chairperson Marilyn Tarpy suggested that Simmons and LeBlanc discuss LeBlanc’s proposal, and bring it up again at the next Commission meeting.

The Commission did hold a public hearing on the budget, and issued three calls for public comment. However, none of the 10 or so people in attendance offered any comment on the budget.