Assembly Center Bids Slated For September

By MIKE HASTEN Advertiser Staff Writer

Baton Rouge — Bids for the USL/Lafayette Assembly Center are scheduled to be taken Sept. 17 with construction to begin as soon as possible thereafter, Sen. Allen Bares said yesterday.

Bares said he has received notice that the state facility planning office has approved the plans and called for bids.

Contractors may review the plans starting Aug. 6.

Funding for the project has been included in the state’s spending program for the next three years.

The proposed $40 million project is being jointly funded by the state and the City of Lafayette. The city is paying $10 million of the cost.

Specifications

Bids will contain several options that may be used in case the project is more expensive than expected. Included in the options are different arrangements for the kitchen, scoreboard and parking lot.

Construction of the center is expected to take about three years. It is to be built adjacent to Cajun Field and additional access routes are to be provided.

The 50,000-square-foot facility will be used for basketball, boxing, tennis, theater presentations, concerts, banquets, exhibitions and conventions. The arena can be arranged in several seating configurations depending upon its use.

The maximum seating — 14,000 — is for boxing. Basketball arrangements will seat 12,000 fans in chair-back seats.

Funding Source

The Legislature yesterday approved a proposal to supply a steady funding source for the center.

Taxes on hotel and motel rooms in the city will be split between the Tourist Commission and the center. Some details of the plan are still to be worked out, said Al Thierry, adviser to Mayor Dud Lastrapes, but the proposal guarantees the commission at least 15 percent increase in funding each year.

In the past the tax has been dedicated to the commission, which uses the funds to attract conventions and tourists to the area.

Commission members and local legislators earlier this session argued over whether the tax should be used for the center. Some members argued that the money would be better spent by the commission’s bringing conventions to the center.