Edwards aglow at prospect of NBA franchise

By LEE FEINSWOG

Advocate staff writer

The deal, once about as likely as the Minnesota Timberwolves making the NBA playoffs, was six months in the making.

Now, the team has been sold, will move to New Orleans and get a new name — none has been chosen yet — and keep Gov. Edwin Edwards smiling.

There is a chance, albeit slim because the new owners think the votes are comfortably in their favor, that the National Basketball Association will deny the move.

If that happens, "I'll cry," Edwards said Tuesday morning at a news conference at the State Capitol in which he did plenty of smiling.

The Timberwolves will play in the Louisiana Superdome until a planned sports complex that includes a basketball arena is finished about two years from now.

The Timberwolves join a state that already has the New Orleans Saints of the National Football League, the New Orleans Jazz and the New Orleans Privateers of the Southern Conference.

The deal, confirmed by NBA Commissioner David Stern, was announced immediately after Edwards was sworn in as governor for his third term.

The Timberwolves have been in Minneapolis since 1988, when they were the Minnesota Lakers.

Edwards, who had been a minority owner, will hold an ownership stake in the team.

The NBA said it has moved the team because it believes the league is better off in New Orleans than in Minneapolis.

"That's always been the case, which is why we had to move the team," Edwards said.

"We've seen this happen before with the New Orleans Jazz and the New Orleans Hornets," he added.

Edwards said he was "very pleased" with the deal and that he was "very happy to have the Timberwolves in New Orleans for the next 30 years.

"We've been working on this for a long time, and I'm glad it's finally happened," he said.

Edwards said he had talked to Stern about the deal for months and that he had been working on it for "as long as I can remember.

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