Funds Won't Cover All Of Civic Center Construction Needs

By CALLIE CABELL

Several items necessary to the completion of Lafayette's new Civic Center on Congress Street are not under contract, the project architect told the Lafayette Beaver Club members Wednesday.

Architect Neil Nehrbass said, "The five interconnected rooms in the 7,000 square-foot meeting area, wiring for exhibit booths, curtains for the theatrical stage and 1,000 parking spaces around the Civic Center are not under the nearly $45 million contract with Blount Brothers Corporation of Montgomery, Ala."

A Beaver Club member then stood up and told the group that the design committee knew from the start that the contract budget wouldn't totally complete the Civic Center. He maintained that the sound system needs to be upgraded and escalators need to be installed. "We're playing a new game that they play at Louisiana Tech: build the building and then get the funds to complete the work inside."

Nehrbass responded that he hopes the additional funds to complete the Civic Center will come from the state.

"Currently three-fourths of the civic center is state-funded," the architect said, "and one-fourth from the city. The University of Southwestern Louisiana is providing the land and the 3,000 parking spaces at Cajun Field to be used during special events."

The "Gumbo Pot or Cajun Dome," as Nehrbass said the civic center is frequently referred to, will function as a multi-purpose building capable of housing a variety of events.

"The center will have a convention capacity of 14,000; a 40,000 square-foot floor exhibit space for 192 booths; seating for 12,000 during basketball games; a full-service banquet area for 3,000; an additional meeting room for 1,000; theatrical room seating 6,040; space for three regular tennis courts; and seating for 11,335 in the festival configuration," said Nehrbass.

"In addition, the Civic Center will have stages that can be placed in three different locations on the main floor and a 8,703 permanent seating capacity."

He noted that the Civic Center will be much larger than Lake Charles's and, unlike most civic centers, the main floor will be at ground level instead of recessed. "When construction is completed in 1985, it will have more parking spaces than the Assembly Center in Baton Rouge."

Nehrbass said, "The only event the Civic Center will not be able to hold is a rodeo, because it would stir up too much dust."

"Construction is well under way," Nehrbass told the club.

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