Governor says yes to assembly center

Gov. Dave Treen made a helicopter trip to the USL campus Tuesday to announce that he would seek to award the contract next week for the construction of the multi-purpose Academic, Civic, and Community Assembly Center in Lafayette.

The lowest base bid for the project had exceeded available funds. Forty million dollars—$30 million in state funds and $10 million in city funds—had been appropriated for the project. As the governor recommended funding the project, including alternates providing seating and kitchen facilities, the low bid would be Blount Brothers' bid of $47,796,895. With the addition of $500,000 for contingencies, Treen explained, the project would be short $8.3 million.

Treen asked that the state and city split the overrun on the same 3-1 basis, with the state's portion coming from the Capital Construction Interest Account. The Lafayette City Council and the Legislative Budget Committee were to meet this week and were expected to approve the governor's suggestion.

Construction on the building could begin as early as January with a three and one-half year construction schedule. "I do expect to be there for opening night—as governor," Treen quipped, "so it can't be more than six years."

Not included in the alternates the governor recommends accepting are parking and such amenities as enhanced acoustics, a theater curtain, and special lighting and sound equipment. "These are items that down the road will have to be added," Treen said. There seems little doubt that political dynamics won't let the additional finishing touches go long unfunded.

Gov. Treen was questioned about his having the plans examined by the LAA, a state trade group of architects which had expressed earlier dissatisfaction with the appointment of Lafayette architect Neil Martin Nehrbass to the project. "We simply asked a few people to look at it," he replied. "It was a personal project for me."

After the press conference, Treen, Lafayette Mayor Dud Lastrapes, USL President Ray Authement, local legislators, city councilmen, and others rode a USL bus to the site of the center for an impromptu groundbreaking.

—JAMES EDMUNDS