Cajundome meeting brings May flowers; especially irises

By DONNA FONTENOT
Staff Writer

Mario Mamatakis jokes about the flower developed and named for her by retired USL professor and friend Charles Arny.

She thought perhaps she'd call it "the Mario Iris." But it became "the Mario Mamatakis" instead, leaving people outside Lafayette and Louisiana to perhaps take that as its scientific name, she jests.

At any rate, Mamatakis says, she's honored to have her name associated with a national award-winning iris created by Arny.

It's an honor she and other Cajundome/Auditorium Management Board members agree should be shared by Lafayette's new civic center.

Enter onto the scene: The Cajundome Iris.

Board members were excited about the prospect Wednesday, having been told by Mamatakis and Louis Mann of Arny's intentions to name an already award-winning, bright red iris after the facility.

The name will have to be submitted to a national or international association for approval, Mann noted. But Arny doesn't anticipate problems with its acceptance, he said.

And what will they do with The Cajundome Iris?

Apparently add it to at least one of four Cajundome courtyards named after flowers - the Iris, Camellia, Azalea and Rose.

Mann says he's already talking to a camellia cultivator as well, for perhaps another flower unique to the Cajundome.

"I tried to get a blue iris, since the Cajundome's color is blue," he added as an afterthought. "But he (Arny) already had this award-winning red one that's just beautiful. I'll bring a picture next time."

The red variety got no objections from Cajundome members, particularly residing chairman and USL vice president Jim Caillier.

"We'll take it," he said, half-laughing and in reference to "USL's color" being red.

The courtyards, or outdoor patios, are intended for private receptions and parties, Cajundome architect Neil Nehrbass said.

Nehrbass also reported on bids received for Cajundome signs at the facility. There was $700,000 budgeted, and the low bid came in at $699,000, he said.

Cajundome director Mike Barber talked of 40 "directional signs" to be put at key intersections in the City, two new seating configuration possibilities, and action pending before the City Council to name an adjacent road "Cajundome Boulevard" and possibly sign a contract for management of Cajundome concessions, security and maintenance.

The Council will take up final adoption on the road name next Tuesday and is likely to act on the contract the following week, Barber said.

Council members have already had one briefing session on the proposed contract and are scheduled for another today. A consultant called in by the Council is expected to be on hand at a noon briefing to discuss the proposal by a Florida firm.

"It (the contract) is key to some of the other things we've been talking about, such as (Cajundome) vendors and staffing," Barber told the management board. "If we can put this thing into place in two or three weeks, why we'll still have five good months left."

The Cajundome is scheduled to open in late October.