Parish Council Leaders Chosen

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Police Jury President Lloyd Girouard of Lafayette, and Youngsville Mayor Ernest Guillot were chosen here Tuesday to head the Lafayette Parish Council — one of eight area parish councils designed to work together in an Economic Development District.

Included in the eight-parish area are, in addition to Lafayette, St. Martin, St. Landry, Acadia, Evangeline, Vermilion, Iberia and St. Mary.

John Norton, director of Louisiana’s Economic Development Association, appeared before a group of parish organizations including the police jury, school board, Farm Bureau, public welfare and others in a meeting in the courtroom here to explain the program and how it can benefit Lafayette Parish.

“Our goal is to attract industry,” Norton said. “What value other benefits we get will just be icing on the cake.”

“Individual parishes often lack sufficient resources to provide a solid base for development,” Norton said. “By pooling the resources of several parishes, more successful economic and industrial development programs can be carried out.”

“Effective economic development programs can best be prepared by full-time professional planning staffs, but few parishes by themselves can afford these staffs. With eight parishes in the Evangeline EDA area, the cost can be divided and all will get the benefits.”

The state EDA director told the group, “This is not an anti-poverty program. There are $100 million in federal benefits to be divided by nine states and I want to see to it that Louisiana gets its share of this money.

“We haven’t been getting it now, and it is the goal of the EDA district programs to see that we get our share,” Norton said.

The EDA spokesman said he had recommended to Washington that Lafayette be chosen as the center of the eight-parish area. But, he said, if Lafayette is not named the center of the program, the parish does not qualify for EDA monies.

“That is not to say,” Norton hastened to add, “that your parish cannot qualify for other benefits from agencies like Housing and Urban Development. It can. You just will not qualify as a destitute area.

“When we talk of Lafayette Parish, we are talking about a wealthy parish,” Norton said. “And I am sure you are proud that yours is a rich area.”

But, he pointed out, EDA funds are used to help solve the job and income problems in areas of high employment and or low family income.

“Under the latter stipulation, Lafayette Parish could qualify,” Norton pointed out that Lafayette has not been officially picked as the center for the area program as yet.

This district program must be approved by the police jury.

Girouard told the group that the jury had voted to go along with the idea of entering the program, “If Lafayette is chosen as the center of the district.”

Norton said that although Lafayette Parish would not be eligible for EDA funds if some other area was chosen as the center for this area, “the parish would get the benefit of district surveys to determine needs of the area.”

In answer to a question by Emery Domingue, consulting engineer for the city of Lafayette, Norton said, “The district we form in this area will become eligible for funds as soon as the organization is set up.”

He said the federal government has indicated a $50,000 budget to study the needs of this area. Of this figure, the federal government will pay 75 per cent or $37,500, and the parishes will be called upon to contribute the remaining $12,500.

“This study should take eight or nine months,” Norton said, “at which time the individual agencies in the eight parishes could begin applying for EDA funds.”

The state director told the parish representatives of a meeting Saturday from 9 a.m. until noon in the Municipal Auditorium at which time mayors, police jury members, school board members from the eight district parishes are to discuss the program jointly.

“We have a district,” Norton said, “because all the other police juries have approved entering the program. If you in Lafayette want to enter the program that is fine, but if you don’t join in, we will go on without you.”