Treen backs Lafayette Civic Center

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LAFAYETTE — Gov. Treen promised his support Tuesday in helping obtain three-fourths of $5 million needed for the Lafayette Civic Center.

The governor said he will seek the $3.7 million from the Legislative Budget Committee's capital outlay interest account. That account, which totals about $20 million, was established by the Legislature for cost overruns, Treen noted. “So the funds are there for this purpose,” he said.

Treen said the extra money will be contingent upon the city coming up with $1.25 million, a 25 percent matching share of the $5 million.

The total cost of the project, if the money is granted by the committee, will be $54 million, Treen said.

The state has already provided $36.2 million, and the city has funded $12.7 million, he said.

The $5 million would fund needed items such as a parking lot, he said.

“I will give all-out support before the legislative committee,” he said.

Construction on the Civic Center, also known as the Cajundome, began in January 1982 when bids exceeded cash on hand by several million.

Items were temporarily cut from the construction with a commitment by Treen that money needed for the omitted features would be obtained later.

“We felt certain a commitment from the governor was always coming,” said Lafayette Mayor Dud Lastrapes.

The mayor said the next step is to hire a director and appoint a commission for the facility, to be completed by 1985.

The issue of appointing an 11-member commission will come before the City Council at the March 1 meeting.

The council has balked at appointing anyone to the commission, contending the state money should be obtained first.

Treen said the project would aid Lafayette’s already-thriving economy. The governor said the Superdome in New Orleans has proven worthwhile for the Crescent City, even though the first cost estimates were at $35 million, compared to actual construction costs of $165 million.

Treen said he is ready to ask the committee for the funds when members of the Lafayette area delegation feel prepared.

State Sen. Armand Brinkhaus of Sunset, who serves on the Budget Committee with State Rep. Mike Thompson of Lafayette, said the matter could be considered in the next few weeks.