

EDC okays Chili's loan

Monitor Staff Reports

GUN BARREL CITY—Gun Barrel City Economic Development Corporation board members approved a \$50,000 loan to the developer of the planned Chili's restaurant property Tuesday.

EDC board members also approved revisions to the corporation's bylaws and retained a Dallas-area development company to review the Richport Commons area for possible future projects during a two-hour regular session.

Board members met for about 20 minutes behind closed doors with Scott Steenson, representing Comstock Partners, LLC, headquartered in the McKinney suburb of Fairview, before unanimously agreeing to the loan.

As approved, the three-year pact calls for an interest rate of 5.5 percent, with the

funds to be used to improve water, sewer, parking and entranceways to the one-acre Chili's site, next to the now-vacant Pauline's Buffet, across the street from the Wal-Mart SuperCenter.

Stenson, an NFL official (he was the field judge in last weekend's AFC championship game between the New England Patriots and the Indianapolis Colts), said he would own the Chili's property, and lease the space to Chili's.

"I actually develop the property, so that they (the restaurant chain) can build a building," Stenson said.

Earlier, the board members heard director Curtis Webster, a member of the board's Visions Committee, recommend a contract with Jefflynn & Company to help develop the EDC's Richport Commons area along Main Street (State Highway 334).

Another committee member, Steve Garwacki, strongly recommended Jefflynn & Company.

MUD board session postponed

"These people are one of the best (developers) I've ever seen," he reported. "These people have a track record (and) have contacts with retailers that we want to see down here."

Jefflynn would first review the Richport site and existing project data, Webster said.

"Their first recommendation will be whether the site, as laid out, would be a doable deal," he said. "If they see that will not be a viable project, they'll tell us."

Board president Todd Hogan pointed out any information provided to Jefflynn should remain confidential, adding, "We would like to see quarterly reports."

"I think I would like to have them make an oral quarterly report to the board," Webster agreed.

In other business, the board:

- agreed to retain Dallas attorney Jeffrey Moore, who they met at a State Comptroller's EDC seminar in December.

"With all the recent changes in the law, we need an attorney who is well-versed in EDC law," board member Patsy Black said.

Board members agreed administrative assistant Rita Evans and Webster would act as contact persons with Moore.

- agreed to restructure the loan to Dan Leonard, owner of the Bait Bucket Bar & Grill, to have two months' payments moved to the end of the existing loan agreement.

The agreement came on a 4-2 vote, as Lloyd McCarley and Dan R. Wood opposed, and Hogan abstained.

That two-month break will allow some additional working capital to pay off several major debts left by the previous owner, Leonard told the directors.

Leonard said his business was growing steadily, adding he felt confident he would be able to resume his loan payments in March.

- approved several revisions in the EDC bylaws as recommended by the bylaws committee, following an article-by-article review.

- rescinded an earlier action to have Evans placed on the city's payroll.

Some aspects of her employment will not fit in with the city's payroll structure, Hogan explained.