

## **Harrison nixes industrial park near Caddo**

COX EAST TEXAS

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**MARSHALL** — An industrial park near Caddo Lake is dead in the water after Tuesday's split vote by Harrison County commissioners.

The court voted 3-2 for "the immediate transfer of the remaining property at the former Longhorn" Army Ammunition Plant for the "sole intention of the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge and its use and enjoyment by the public."

The motion was read into the record by Precinct 4 Commissioner Jeffrey Thompson. Precinct 1 Commissioner Jerry Lomax seconded, with Precinct 2 Commissioner Emma Bennett voting in favor of the motion.

Dissenters Judge Wayne McWhorter and Precinct 3 Commissioner James Greer said the court was making a mistake.

"I, personally, think it is one of the biggest errors the county has ever made," Greer said.

Commissioners nixing the plan said they were voting their constituents' sentiment, a position Thompson alluded to in his motion.

"After the public hearing last night where over 85 percent of the public in attendance voiced their opposition ... I move that the commissioners court request the Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison and the Honorable Louie Gohmert to remove the temporary hold" and transfer the property to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Department, he said.

Local businessmen had asked U.S. Sen. Hutchison, R-Texas, and U.S. Congressman Gohmert, R-Tyler, to set aside 2,000 acres of an 8,500-acre tract for industrial development.

McWhorter reiterated his belief that no tourisms would be lost for the wildlife refuge if the southwest corner were given for industrial development. He also said "good transportation is quite accessible to this property" and "with the Clean Air and Clean Water acts, only environmentally sound businesses could be located" there.

Discussions on the motion continued for about 20 minutes, with McWhorter exiting the courtroom into commissioners' offices and re-entering through the public doors and delivering a six-page speech from the podium.

McWhorter said the court had ignored those who are "really desperate for a job. We heard from a lot of people last night, almost all of whom live on or near (Caddo) Lake," he said. "I did not hear a single person opposing the Karnack Business Park who was looking for a job.

"Probably 70 percent of the people speaking against ... were retired folks. They moved here with their money. They did not make their money here because they could not. Some even admitted that.

"But I did hear a strong appeal from the black community who said they want jobs and they want the Karnack Business Park. We heard ... from (Karnack Independent School District) school board president (Jody Yancy) about how important new jobs would be."

McWhorter also reminded commissioners six of Karnack Independent School District's seven board members sent letters of support for an industrial park to McWhorter and to Hutchison.

"I implore you to think about the black community that needs jobs now, and to think about the great brain drain of our young people who must leave here to find good jobs.

"I can sleep good laying my head down tonight knowing that I did all I could do to get jobs into this county."

Bennett indicated, she too, would sleep well.

"After listening to what you had to say in the last commissioners court meeting, last night and the phone calls I've gotten — which kept me awake at night — I have to vote for" the motion.

"You voted for me to represent your best interests," she told the standing-room-only crowd, "and 80 percent of those who supported me were asking me not to put an industrial park in that area."

Lomax said he, too, was voting the wishes of his constituents.

"I echo your thoughts," he told Bennett. "You (the voters) are the folks who are telling us what to do."

"I can't support this ...." Greer said of the motion.

"I do know that 900 acres on Page Road recently sold for \$3,400 per acre. I haven't done the math, but that's a lot of money. Here are 2,000 acres (available) at no cost to anyone. We are telling the world we are against industry."