

## THE REGION

### Eagle care



Associated Press photo

Rehabilitation specialist Jamie Primm stands by while Susan Wells, an Audubon Zoo veterinarian, takes a blood sample from an ailing bald eagle in New Orleans

recently. The eagle, found near Houma by two teenagers, is expected to be released in about a month.

## Denham Springs mayor wants to abolish police department

DENHAM SPRINGS — As a savings measure, Mayor Herbert Hoover wants to abolish the city police force, eliminating 19 full-time employees in the process, effective Jan. 1, 1989.

Hoover said Thursday that he will offer the proposal to the Denham Springs Board of Aldermen Monday to contract law enforcement with the Livingston Parish Sheriff's Office. He said he plans to place the item on the board's agenda, which will go out Saturday, even though Police Chief Scott Jones maintains he has not been officially notified.

Under terms of the mayor's proposal, the Livingston Parish Sheriff's Office would receive \$585,000 a year from the city to patrol in the Denham Springs city limits.

Every city police officer would be given a chance for employment with the sheriff, Hoover said. "They'll get a little less pay, but they'll have a sheriff's department car to take home and a little better benefits. The two combined amount to about \$8,000 a year," he said.

"This is not my decision," Jones said. "I don't have a lot of comment except to say this is all news to me and that I hate to see anything like this happen to the Denham Springs Police Department."

"We have a good organization, but I'm in a bad position in that I'm appointed by the mayor and board. I'm willing to do whatever I can to make the police department continue to work," he said. "I'm sorry to see it happen this way, but I'm not giving up."

The mayor said he patterned his proposal on the action taken in 1985 in:

"Donaldsonville abolished its police department three years ago, turning its city patrol over to Sheriff Harold Tridico. That city is only renewed its contract with the sheriff's office for another four years after realizing a savings of \$160,000.

"We already have duplications of service in the city and this will eliminate that," Hoover said. "They've been talking about it for years in Baton Rouge. They haven't done it yet, but they're talking about it. We've disbanded our detective unit earlier and the sheriff's office helped us with that. They took over our jail, our juvenile department and our detective division, allowing us to cut nine employees."

Denham Springs is exempt from a 1-cent parishwide tax for law enforcement from the Livingston Parish Sheriff's Office. "The 1-cent sales tax was not applied to Denham Springs because we had our own police department," Hoover said. He said he already presented his plan to three aldermen in separate meetings. "I didn't want to surprise them Monday by throwing it on the table," Hoover said.

He denied, however, rumors that he already had sufficient votes to carry the proposal.

Attempts to reach four of the five board members Thursday were unsuccessful. Three were out of town and a fourth was not at home. A fifth member, Arthur Perkins, said he had been briefed on the matter and it did not appear to be a bad idea "if you look at it from the amount of money to be saved."

Efforts to reach Sheriff Odum Graves also were unsuccessful. His wife said he was out of town for three days.

Jones said he had heard reports about the mayor's plan, but did not know it was public knowledge. "I was expecting the agenda to be out Saturday. All this is news to me," he said.

Jones has been with the police department for eight years and has been chief for seven years.

Hoover denied any personal animosity between Jones and himself, although Jones said the mayor had asked him to resign on at least one occasion.

When asked if there were any personal problems between the police chief and himself, Hoover said, "I wonder how there could be since the police department has problems and has been investigated twice within the last year, and despite these problems, I offered Scott Jones an administrative assistant job at City Hall at the same salary and benefits he now receives."

"Does this sound like personal problems when I offered to make Chief Jones my right-hand man?" Hoover said a grand jury investigated the police department last year and the sheriff's office had conducted an investigation of the department the year before. When asked the nature of the investigations, Hoover said the grand jury probe was "a conspiracy against me." He said the sheriff's probe involved accusations from both departments against each other.

Perkins said he had no knowledge of any animosity between the mayor and the police chief.

## Opinions split evenly at hearing on new permit for CECOS

LIVINGSTON — About 250 people filled the large courtroom in the Livingston Parish Courthouse to hear opinions Thursday night on whether the CECOS International hazardous waste landfill near here should be issued a new operating permit.

About 50 people presented their opinions Thursday night during the three-hour public hearing staged by the state Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The speakers at the hearing were about evenly divided for and against the permit application.

Bill Mollere, DEQ administrator of permits, said an adjudicatory hearing on CECOS will begin at 9 a.m. next Friday at the state Land and Natural Resources Building in Baton Rouge before hearing officer Ernest Easterly III.

Easterly will make a recommendation to DEQ Secretary Paul Templett. The recommendation could be to grant the permit, to deny it or to approve it if certain changes are made

by the company, according to Richard Mayer, an EPA representative from Dallas. Either side in the case could appeal the DEQ decision by going to court, he said.

One of the loudest bursts of applause followed the first speaker, CECOS manager Steve Jacobs.

"CECOS is an integral part of Louisiana's answer to the environmental question," Jacobs said. "Proper handling of waste is needed to protect the health of citizens."

The only outburst from the audience during actual testimony came when a truck driver for the company asked why only a few people have attended recent open houses at the landfill. Jeanine Wilson of French Settlement shouted "because we don't want to jump into a septic tank."

During her earlier testimony, Wilson said the company has "shown disregard for our health, can't be trusted to abide by regulations" and "our future will be filled with sick children."

One of several CECOS employees who spoke, Jay Howard of Watson, said, "From personal knowledge, I know CECOS has made every effort to correct problems from the previous

owner."

CECOS bought the 282-acre facility from Southwest Environmental Co. in 1978 and is constructing a 35-foot-deep wall around a three-acre cell left by that company where chemicals have been found in the ground water, according to spokeswoman Karla Swacker.

"There has never been a successful hazardous waste company. They're all bad," said Theresa Robert of Ascension Parish.

Dale and Charla Aydel of French Settlement and their 11-year-old son Josh spoke against the permit. They said the location is unsuitable, government agencies can't properly oversee the site, the waste is trucked over substandard roads and bridges and new businesses won't locate in a polluted area.

Gordon Boutwell, an engineer for Soil Testing Inc. of Baton Rouge, said CECOS "is doing as good a job as others" and "20 times as much as the state requires."

Rep. Bernard Carrier of Denham Springs said he "is not in

favor" of the permit because of "marginal geological conditions."

Mitchell Hatter, technical manager for CECOS, said, "If an environmental issue conflicts with a business issue, the environmental issue has always prevailed."

"I've seen a lot of young CECOS employees tonight," said Robert Kidd of Tangipahoa Parish. "I haven't seen any old ones."

Livingston Parish Police Jury member Dewey Harrell said CECOS was cited by the DEQ and the EPA for 1,700 violations between 1980 and 1985 and paid a \$2.5 million settlement in the case.

"That doesn't sound to me like they're doing a good job. There's something wrong down there," Harrell said. "We're going to keep fighting until we get them out."

"I'm not saying CECOS is doing a bad job. I'm saying it's in the wrong place," said jury President Gerald Sullivan. "The geological makeup of this ground is not right for this."

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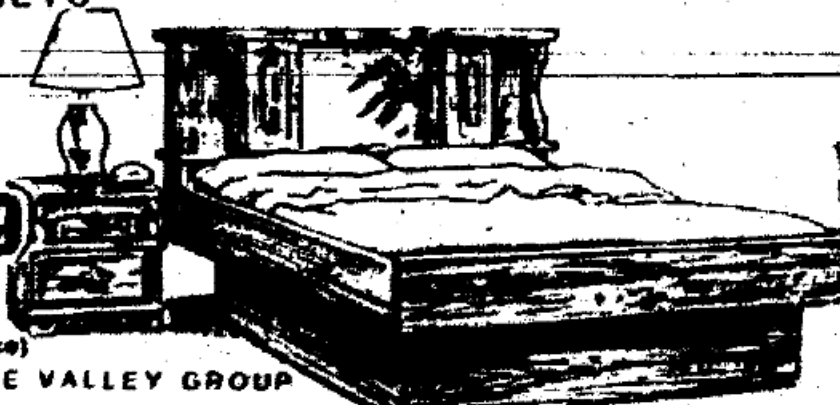
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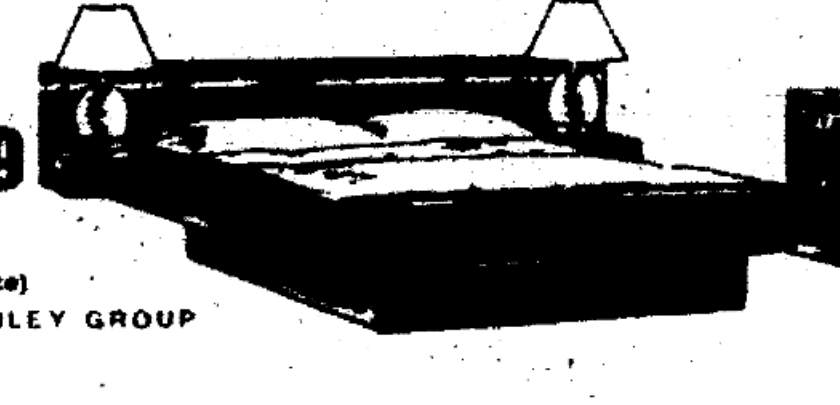
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