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A&M considers Ramada for dorm space

Three Board members decide to hold decision

By Yvonne DeGraw
Staff Writer

Three members of the Texas A&M Board of Regents who toured the Ramada Inn of College Station Wednesday decided not to decide on a recommendation concerning the purchase of the hotel.

"We're just considering our options now," said Doug DeCluitt, chairman of the regents' Special Committee to Make Any Further Recommendations on the Ramada Inn Property.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Aug. 23 and 24.

For over three hours, the committee and numerous A&M officials discussed the possibility of turning the hotel into a dormitory in a session that was closed to the public.

Regents Royce Wisenbaker, John Mobley and DeCluitt toured two campus dorms — Mosher Hall and Underwood Hall — and the inn after the session.

The Ramada Inn was offered in a closed-bid sale by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation on June 9.

FDIC spokesman Victor Robert said two bids were made in the original auction, but neither has been accepted. Because no acceptable offers were made at the auction, the FDIC can accept other bids.

Currently, it is working with "more than four offers," Robert said. The FDIC has not been contacted by A&M officials, he said, but he had heard about the Regents' meeting and was curious about the results.

The Ramada's current owner is the FDIC, which acquired the ho-

tel when it closed Unitedbank-Houston on April 30. Unitedbank had purchased it just three weeks before in a foreclosure sale brought on when Joe Ferreri, the original owner, declared bankruptcy.

Ray Eckart, general manager of the Ramada, says the tower has

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— Doug DeCluitt, Board special committee chairman

304 rentable rooms, 20 two-bedroom apartments on the unfinished floors and a 5,000-square-foot penthouse. He says several offices also could be converted to rooms.

The three regents visited the penthouse, one of the two unfinished floors, a furnished room and the cafeteria and kitchens at the Ramada. Earlier, they toured comparable facilities in the Commons.

DeCluitt said the committee was including qualitative aspects in its economic analysis.

"You have to compare quality as well as cost," he said.

He said they were basing their analysis on the assumption that, if

bought, the Ramada would be ready for occupation by Fall 1988.

It would be a matter of a few months and a seven-digit investment to renovate the structure, he said.

The committee has received several estimates of the cost of turning the hotel into a dormitory but would not disclose any numbers.

DeCluitt said it is generally less expensive to purchase a building than to build it when the economic situation is declining.

"That's the assumption," he said. "In a distressed market it costs less to acquire property than to build an equivalent structure."

He said the committee was even considering aspects like what to do with the swimming pool.

"Don't presume the swimming pool will stay here," he said.

Dr. John Koldus, vice president for student services, said A&M will have 440 fewer dorm rooms next fall because of Corps dorm renovations. With an estimated 2,500 more students next year, this will place even greater demands on a housing department that must turn away many students each year.

Reactions during the tour of the Ramada were mixed.

"It certainly has a lot to offer," remarked one member of the retinue.

The tour was a bit hurried because the air conditioning was turned off on the unused floors.

Wisenbaker recalled that a former employee left to work on the air conditioning system of the original building 24 years ago.

"I think it (the hotel) is a bit like I am," he said. "It's getting old."



Members of the Texas A&M Board of Regents peer out a window on the 17th story during their visit to the Ramada Inn in College Station.

Photo by Robert W. Rizzo

Reagan nominates Bork to join Supreme Court justices

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Reagan picked Robert H. Bork, a staunchly conservative appeals court judge, for a Supreme Court seat Wednesday, risking a bruising showdown with the Democratic-led Senate over his confirmation.

If seated, Bork could be instrumental in helping alter some of the court's landmark decisions, such as a woman's right to an abortion and the principle of affirmative action.

Announcing Bork's selection, Reagan praised him as "a premier constitutional authority" and said, "His outstanding intellect

and unrivaled scholarly credentials are reflected in his thoughtful examination of the broad, fundamental issues of our times."

The 60-year-old Bork was the top choice of hardline conservatives to succeed Justice Lewis F. Powell, 79, who announced last Friday he was leaving the bench because of health problems and his age.

Bork is best known nationally for carrying out then-President Nixon's order in 1973 to fire Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox after two higher officials re-

fused. At the time, he was Nixon's solicitor general.

Reagan called on the Senate to confirm Bork before the court's new term in October, but Democrats served notice they wanted to examine his qualifications thoroughly. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., a member of the Judiciary Committee, said, "The Senate is going to carry out its constitutional role... with probably more scrutiny than anything this decade."

Leahy said he could not envision Bork being confirmed before Congress' August

recess. He said that with Bork on the nation's highest court, "his vote would determine that abortions would not be legal today."

"I think we have to take a look at that," he said.

Bork once said that the Supreme Court's 1973 decision legalizing abortion was "a classic instance" of the court imposing its morality on local jurisdictions. He said abortion should be a matter of local control.

Privately, White House officials said they expected a tough fight in getting Bork's

nomination through the Judiciary Committee, and then expected a filibuster from opponents on the Senate floor.

The Supreme Court is in recess until October.

In addition to opposing abortion, Bork has complained that Supreme Court decisions have extended constitutional protections and federal authority far beyond their proper bounds.

In a 1982 speech, he sharply criticized high court decisions on abortion, sexual freedom, and many types of free expression.

Higher taxes in Texas may cause increased unemployment level

By Greg Sellers
Reporter

The Texas economy has been suffering for the past few years, and according to numerous reports, increasing taxes would have a negative effect on employment for Texans.

The Committee for Economic Recovery, which consists of 85 organizations and groups, opposes the proposed tax hike and on Monday urged Gov. Bill Clements, Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, Speaker of the House Gib Lewis and all senators and representatives to implement budget cuts proposed by the Texas Conservative Coalition.

Citing results from numerous studies on taxes and unemployment, group spokesman Richard Ford said in a report that the results indicate that increasing taxes will mean a decrease in jobs for Texans.

One of the studies was done by the Texas A&M Center for Education and Research in Free Enterprise, and although it dealt primarily with income tax, it did point out that increasing taxes was not the appropriate solution to combat Texas' high unemployment. The center's director, Dr. Svetozar Pejovich, says he feels that the real problem lies in tax reform.

"The issue is not whether to raise or lower taxes, but to come

up with a feasible tax reform measure," Pejovich says.

The correlation between higher taxes and fewer jobs is "not that simple," he says, although one of the center's reports does indicate that higher income taxes have a negative effect on the work force.

Over the last four years, sales taxes in Texas have risen 31 percent and gas taxes have tripled, according to a report compiled by Ford.

Hobby and the Senate currently want taxes increased by another \$6 billion, which, according to the committee, would delay Texas' economic recovery and leave far too many Texans unemployed.

The Texas Conservative Coalition pointed out that increases for mental health, the prison system and higher education would not be affected if its money-saving and non-tax revenue ideas are followed.

Ford's report says, over the past 10 years, California and Massachusetts have had to cut taxes in order to foster their economic recoveries.

The committee has asked each senator and representative to sign a "no tax increase" pledge and return it within a week.

The committee also urges citizens to contact their representatives to emphasize the need for those elected officials to sign the pledge.

Democratic hopefuls offer criticism of Reagan in early campaign debate

HOUSTON (AP) — Seven Democratic presidential contenders chided criticism of President Reagan and vied for political standing in a wide open race for their party's nomination as they met Wednesday night in an extraordinarily early campaign debate.

Debating six months before the dawn of the 1988 election year, the seven blasted Reaganomics and the administration's defense policies as they took turns offering themselves as providers of "better leadership."

The debate was an expanded, two-hour version of commentator William F. Buckley's "Firing Line," and was televised live over the Public Broadcasting Service. It took place in the Wortham Center before an

audience so partisan that the Rev. Jesse Jackson earned loud applause when he noted, "President Reagan will be gone in 18 months as a matter of law."

Buckley asked the first question — which portrait would each candidate remove from its perch in the White House Cabinet Room.

Jackson, answering first, said he would deny Herbert Hoover his place and substitute a portrait of Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas. "A great president," he deemed him, the Vietnam War notwithstanding.

Jackson's six rivals answered the same question in turn, and thus the first debate of the 1988 campaign cycle was underway.

From the opening moments, Jackson and the six other contenders

took turns at what Buckley characterized as "Reagan bashing."

"I think we have really sold our future in the last seven years," said Rep. Richard Gephardt, D-Mo., in comments echoed by the six other contenders for next year's Democratic presidential nomination.

Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware accused Reagan of failing to confront the difficulties posed by the AIDS epidemic and of planning to "nuclearize the heavens" with his "star wars" program, while Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee scored the president for permitting officials to shred documents and steal public funds.

Sen. Paul Simon called Reagan's legacy grim.

"There is no question that this administration has moved in the wrong

direction," he said.

Bruce Babbitt, the former governor of Arizona, said that although Reagan often speaks of eliminating the federal deficit, "He's never submitted a balanced budget, even within \$100 billion."

Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis said that under Reagan's stewardship some Americans are doing very well, but others such as farmers and iron range workers in Minnesota are doing poorly. "We need star schools, not star wars," he said.

The Democratic debate was the earliest of many that will be staged by television networks, newspapers and other organizations. A "Firing Line" program for Republican presidential hopefuls is planned for September from Los Angeles.

Cargo plane crashes, kills 5 at Air Force base

FORT BRAGG, N.C. (AP) — A C-130 cargo plane performing a tank-dropping maneuver crashed and burned on a dirt runway Wednesday, killing five servicemen but stopping 100 yards short of bleachers filled with spectators.

Four of six Air Force crewmen on the plane were killed, as well as an Army soldier on the ground, said Capt. Brian Irving of Pope Air Force Base, where the four-engine turboprop was based.

Irving said three crewmen were taken by helicopter to Womack Community Hospital at Fort Bragg. Sgt. Lori Cogan of the Fort Bragg

Public Affairs Office later said one of those crewmen had died. The two surviving crewmen were being transferred to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Irving said the soldier killed on the ground was one of two men in a military vehicle hit by the plane after it skidded 1,000 yards down a dirt runway and into some trees. He said he did not know what happened to the second man.

The plane was displaying a technique in which a parachute is used to pull a tank or other vehicle out the rear cargo door while the plane is only a few feet off the ground, offi-

cial said. The maneuver, performed in front of a crowd including families of 82nd Airborne Division troopers, was part of a military exercise open to the public.

Irving said he did not know how many spectators were in the bleachers, which were designed for 5,200 people.

Capt. Donald Sensing of the public information office at Pope Air Force Base, where the plane is based, said landing gear always is extended for the maneuver and it was not unusual for the wheels to hit the ground.

"We really saw what it didn't do,"

Sensing said. "The aircraft should have gained altitude, but it did not. Then, the aircraft went out of sight and the next thing we saw was a ball of fire."

Irving said, "There was a malfunction. Where the malfunction was, or what caused it, I really couldn't speculate. Something just went wrong."

The plane's tail section was nearly three-fourths of a mile from where the tank was dropped on the runway. Debris was scattered down the runway, with the plane's tailgate only a few hundred feet from the tank.