

IT property was once site of Houmas Indian village, archaeologist testifies

By Tim Talley
Special to the State Times

A historic 14th century Indian village was located on property where a California-based hazardous waste management firm wants to build a waste treatment plant, an archaeologist said this morning.

Brian Guevin, an archaeologist who has worked for the state and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said property obtained by the IT Corp for a \$135 million hazardous waste plant was once the site of the Great Houmas Indian village.

The village was the center of the south Louisiana tribe for more than 30 years beginning in 1706. Guevin said historical and archaeological evidence indicates that Indian villagers relocated to various portions of IT's property as the area was settled by Europeans.

"We basically just opened the window on one portion of the site," Guevin said. "I just never had the chance to archaeologically survey this area."

Guevin testified on the final day of testimony in a rehearing on state operating permits for IT's proposed plant. The permits, issued by the state in 1981, were remanded to state environmental officials for more study after opponents challenged the permits in court.

Following Guevin's testimony, Kirby Verret, chairman of the 11,000-member United Houma Nation Inc., asked hearing officer George Cramer for a two-week extension of the rehearing to present additional evidence about the site of the ancient Indian village.

"We request that we be granted the two weeks to present our information because Louisiana and all of its citizens would lose an irreplaceable part of Louisiana history," Verret said.

Cramer, head of the ground water protection division of the state Department of Environmental Quality, said Verret can present his evidence after the hearing concludes. He said the hearing record will remain open after testimony concludes.

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Merger set to advance Helix research

In an effort to advance LSU and the Baton Rouge-based Helix International Corp.'s research into a new class of disease-killing drugs, the company will merge one of its subsidiaries with a Colorado investment fund.

Helix, which has a longstanding agreement to transfer technology from LSU labs to commercial applications, recently spun the university's "lytic peptide" research into a wholly owned subsidiary called Helix BioMedix Inc.

Helix BioMedix Inc. signed a letter of intent to merge with Cartel Acquisitions Inc. of Denver, an approximately half-billion-dollar shell company, publicly held and traded over the counter on pink sheets.

Keith Lameau, president of both Helix International and its new subsidiary, said Tuesday the tentative agreement calls for a "direct stock-for-stock" merger with Cartel.

Helix BioMedix will put up all of its outstanding shares in exchange for restricted shares representing about 84 percent of Cartel's outstanding common stock.

The combined company will adopt the Helix BioMedix Inc. name once the agreement is finalized, following required legal proceedings, Lameau said. The company will be a "controlled" subsidiary of Helix International. Both entities will have some common directors, Lameau said.

Lameau said the spinoff establishes Helix BioMedix as a stand-alone company with a single business focus separate from Helix International's other research activities.

The single-interest research presents a clearer picture for investors and could attract further funding, potentially \$1.5 million to \$5 million in additional capital on the public market, Lameau said.

Cartel is a blind pool, or a non-operating shell company, organized as a vehicle for investments in potential business opportunities. Cartel is traded publicly on pink sheets, so called because of the color of the paper, which lists share prices and market makers of companies that have yet to be traded on the National Association of Securities Dealers exchange.

Lameau said the merger combines a monied non-operational company — Cartel — with an operational firm in search of capital, Helix BioMedix.

He said the merger is a first step toward getting the technology to commercial markets. The agreement could be followed by corroborative agreements with pharmaceutical companies, he added.

Helix BioMedix will be the exclusive licensee of the "lytic peptide" technology, which continues to be jointly owned by LSU and Helix International, Lameau said. Helix funded \$500,000 in research at LSU and is conducting its own peptide research as well.

A team of LSU scientists headed by biologist Jesse Jaynes developed the lytic peptides, a group of protein compounds often referred to as "silver bullets." They are capable of killing diseased cells while leaving healthy cells unharmed.

The drugs have potential antibiotic uses and chemotherapeutic uses against cancer cells and cells infected by the AIDS virus, researchers have said.

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