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## **New port project could create 1,000 jobs** **MATTHEW PLEASANT**

### **Staff Writer**

HOUMA -- Gulf Island Fabrication aims to build a dry dock at the Port of Terrebonne, a multimillion dollar project that would bring up to a thousand new jobs to the area, company officials say.

To break ground on the proposed dock, which would allow companies to build and repair various ships, Gulf Island Fabrication is seeking state money to cover part of the project's estimated \$15 million cost.

"If we can't do it with state support, we'll probably do it on our own," said Kerry Chauvin, Gulf Island president. "Basically, we're looking at the possibility of using state funds."

The Terrebonne Economic Development Authority Board of Directors passed a resolution Tuesday night that would allow Michael Ferdinand, its chief executive officer, to sign contracts with the state for the project.

"The resolution allows us to start the process to appropriate the funds," Ferdinand said.

Much of the discussion during the board's meeting was on whether the resolution should be reworded to ensure that none of the board members, who may have business ties to Gulf Island, would unfairly benefit from the dock's construction.

The board passed the resolution with the condition that if any of the board members represent a conflict of interest with the project, it would be up to that member to leave the board to ensure that the project could proceed.

"We need to support Gulf Island," Ferdinand said during the meeting. "That's the main goal of TEDA."

Henry Richard, TEDA's board president, said he thinks it is unlikely that a board member's business would conflict with the dock's construction. He said it's up to the board's lawyer to decide whether a member's business connections cause a conflict.

Though Gulf Island is seeking money to help build the dock, TEDA members say the Port of Terrebonne will be its ultimate owners.

Estimates of how many people will be employed by the proposed dock vary. TEDA officials said the dock would employ about 200 workers, while Chauvin estimated it would create anywhere from 500 to 1,000 jobs.

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