

PORT ARTHUR

Motiva to buy, rehab vintage digs

■ Company will turn two historic downtown buildings into office space for 500 workers.

By Kaitlin Bain

Motiva Enterprises on Wednesday announced plans to purchase a pair of historic buildings in downtown Port Arthur for 500 office workers, including an undetermined number of expected new hires.

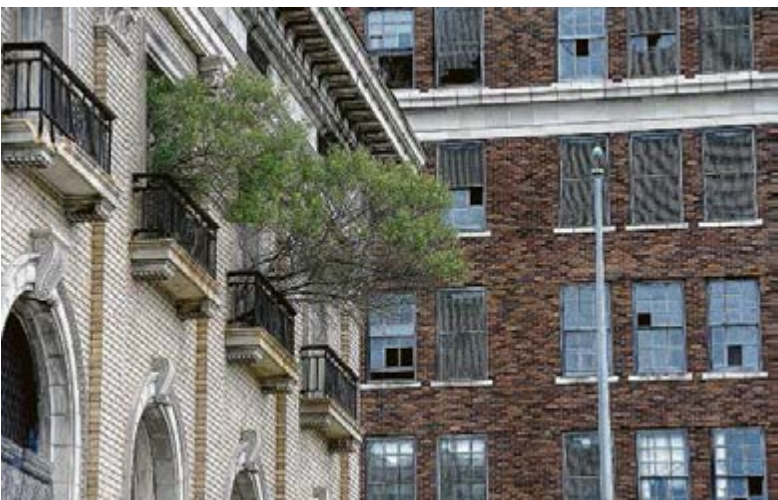
The company's purchase of the Adams Building and the

Federal Building, across the street from each other at 440 and 500 Austin Ave., respectively, is expected to close in mid-May, company STL Deals Manager Jay Hall said.

Motiva spokeswoman Angela Goodwin added that the company will begin developing a rehabilitation plan on the two buildings immediately.

Because the transaction has not closed and the plan has not been completed, the company does not have a firm development timeline. Hall said he

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Motiva is in the process of purchasing the historic and long-abandoned Adams and Federal Buildings on Austin Street in downtown Port Arthur. The sites will be used for needed office space near the plant. Motiva expects to move 500 employees into the facilities after renovation and repairs are made. They plan to maintain the exterior to reflect the historic feel of the downtown area.

Kim Brent / The Enterprise

ENERGY



Guiseppe Barranco / The Enterprise

The Port of Beaumont's Orange County terminal overpass will allow road and rail traffic to operate simultaneously.

Overpass signals growth

\$12.5M span keeps trucks moving as oil and gas flow into port by rail

By Jacob Dick

The Port of Beaumont's Orange County Terminal is addressing infrastructure needs to keep up with its growing success as a hub for oil and refined products.

The latest project to be completed there is a \$12.5

million overpass that prevents tanker trucks and other vehicles from getting stranded by oil trains coming and going from the terminal site.

The port, which partnered with Jefferson Energies in 2012 to operate its trans-liquid terminal, now sees up to 40 trains a day carrying tanks

of ethanol, gasoline or even heavy crude from Canada. This rise in activity and industry profile has also led to a loss of 1,483 work hours per year as trains regularly blocked off the terminal's main entrance.

"There was no timing it or predicting when you would

get caught," Port Director Chris Fisher said. "It didn't matter if it was a work truck or if we were with an elected official."

The terminal's main entrance for all of the personnel and tanker trucks coming and

OVERPASS, page A6

TEXAS POLITICS

House backs smaller pay raise for teachers

■ Bill approval sets up talks with Senate over how much is enough, who should receive it.

By Andrea Zelinski
AUSTIN BUREAU

AUSTIN — Teachers, counselors, bus drivers and others who work full time at public schools would receive an \$1,850 average pay raise next year under a bill the Texas House approved overwhelmingly Wednesday, although the amount is a far cry from

the \$5,000 pay raise senators want to give teachers and librarians.

The bill, which passed the House 148-1, is the latest development in negotiations between the two chambers for a \$9 billion plan to boost the number of students reading at grade level and graduating from college or earning post-secondary degrees.

"It starts with the recognition that every person who has a positive effect on a child's life — and for our schools that means our teach-

EDUCATION, page A7



Clarice Silber / Associated Press

State Rep. Dan Huberty, left, R-Houston, speaks with Texas House Speaker Dennis Bonnen and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, right, before the chamber debates a bipartisan school finance bill Wednesday in Austin.

COURTS

Suspect: Shooting was not murder

■ Accused calls killing self-defense in video shown on first day of capital murder trial.

By Erica Apodaca

A Beaumont man on trial for capital murder is claiming he acted in self-defense.

"I didn't go there to kill anyone," the defendant, Calvin James Holman, told investigators during a videotaped interview a day after the Dec. 16, 2016, slaying of 63-year-old Raymond Weatherly at his westside home.

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COURTS

Former BISD police officer faces sex case

By Kaitlin Bain and Haley Bruyn

A former Beaumont Independent School District police officer has been indicted after allegedly having sex with a student.

Quincey Daniels, 28, was indicted for an alleged improper

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POLITICS

House chairman asks IRS for 6 years of Trump’s tax returns

By Marcy Gordon
AP BUSINESS WRITER

WASHINGTON — A House committee chairman on Wednesday formally asked the IRS to provide six years of President Donald Trump’s personal tax returns and the returns for some of his businesses as Democrats try to shed light on his complex financial deal-

ings and potential conflicts of interest. The request by Massachusetts Rep. Richard Neal, who heads the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, is the first such demand for a sitting president’s tax information in 45 years. The move is likely to set off a huge legal battle between Democrats controlling the House and the

Trump administration. Neal made the request in a letter to IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig, asking for Trump’s personal and business returns for 2013 through 2018. He asked for the documents in seven days, setting an April 10 deadline. Trump told reporters Wednesday he “would not be inclined” to provide his tax returns to the commit-

tee. Three of the eight Trump businesses in Neal’s request are also among the 14 Trump legal entities that were subpoenaed by the attorneys general of Maryland and Washington, D.C., in a lawsuit now in a federal appeals court. That suit alleges that Trump is violating the Constitution by accepting

profits through foreign and domestic officials who stay at his Washington hotel. The Trump businesses in the new request — part of Trump’s global empire of some 500 entities — include the trust he set up to handle all his holdings during his presidency, making it the most important of the group. Also included is

Trump’s golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey. An IRS spokesman said the agency had no immediate comment on Neal’s request. Democrats insist that obtaining Trump’s tax filings falls within their mandate of congressional oversight. Republicans have denounced it as a political witch hunt and invoked privacy concerns.



Motiva is in the process of purchasing the historic and long-abandoned Federal, left, and Adams buildings on Austin Street in downtown Port Arthur.



BUILDINGS Rehab to include internal demolition, reconstruction, any needed facade work

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expects it to take about 2½ years. Houston-based Motiva is an affiliate of Saudi Refining. Its Port Arthur Refinery, currently the largest in the United States, was the fifth largest in the world when the company completed an expansion in 2012. The rehabilitation will include internal demolition, reconstruction and any necessary work to the buildings’ facade. “Our hope is to maintain the integrity of the outside because it goes with the downtown ap-

ONLINE More photos of the Federal and Adams buildings, BeaumontEnterprise.com

peal,” he said. The Federal Building was constructed in 1911 and the Adams in 1924. Hall said that Motiva felt choosing such historically significant buildings would honor the city’s heritage as well as its long relationship with the local plant, which opened as Texaco’s first refinery in 1903. Some of the expected 500 employees currently work in 230 module buildings, similar to portable buildings used by some schools, at the Motiva

plant just outside the city limits. The rest will be hired as the company grows, although the company did not have a firm number or timeline for the hires. Moving them to these two buildings will “consolidate them into one central location so they can collaborate together,” he said. Motiva doesn’t currently have solid plans to buy more downtown buildings, he said, but it will do a needs assessment based on long-term plans for the refinery “and acquire real

estate as needed.” The company is also considering a separate \$6.6 billion expansion at its Port Arthur refinery. Final decision on that expansion is not expected until 2020. Jefferson County Commissioner Michael Sinegal said with the buildings’ purchase, he’s “singing Motiva’s praises.” “We’ve been waiting on something like this for Port Arthur for a long time,” he said. Assistant City Manager Rebecca Underhill said

the city is optimistic that the investment will bring more retail and other money into downtown, infusing new energy into the area. “This is part of a dream for revitalization for downtown, and the idea that Motiva is going to invest in the downtown and in the classic buildings of downtown Port Arthur, we’re just thrilled to work with them in any way that we can to assist with this project,” she said. The city expects the investment will bring res-

taurants, coffee shops, retail and other investment downtown that will cater to these workers and any other businesses that may soon come into the community. “The key is to get buildings in use (and) people here,” she said, “and the commerce will follow.” Underhill couldn’t say if any other specific businesses were looking to relocate downtown but said there’s “a lot of interest and activity” in the area. Jacob Dick contributed.

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OVERPASS As crude production increases, more trains are likely to roll into region

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going from the terminal had to pass by the main rail lines for not just the terminal but also the steel mill next door. The recently opened overpass allows those vehicles to bypass the three main lines bringing trains from the BNSF, Union Pacific and KCS railroads. Started in 2014, the project used a \$6.4 million Federal Highway Administration grant disbursed by the Texas Department of Transportation along with funds from the port’s operational revenues.

Jefferson Energy Cos., majority-owned by Fortress Transportation and Infrastructure Investors, said the new Orange County Terminal Overpass will increase safety and efficiency as it increases its activity at the terminal in the future.



Guisepppe Barranco / The Enterprise

The Port of Beaumont’s Orange County terminal overpass recently opened to traffic.

“In addition to helping us better move our cargo and people, this overpass provides increased safety measures — allowing traffic to bypass multiple rail lines — and helps the environment by lessening wait times for vehicles entering and exiting the facility,”

the company said in a statement. The Orange County Terminal works as a public-private partnership, giving Jefferson Energy Cos. ownership of the facility and its existing infrastructure during its 50-year-lease with the port. If

the company decides to leave after its lease, the terminal and any improvements performed by the company are returned to the Port of Beaumont. As U.S. and Canadian crude production increases, more trains are likely to roll into Southeast Texas.

Some pipeline projects aimed at connecting the oil fields of the Great North with buyers and exporters in the south have been scrapped, and the Keystone Pipeline was reduced to 80 percent capacity in 2018 after a leak. According to a 2018 report from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, Canadian crude oil production has continued to outpace pipeline capacity, driving demand for more oil by rail. In January, crude oil by train from Canada to the Gulf Coast was up a 34 percent increase from the previous year. Sade Chick, manager of corporate affairs with the port, said tonnage of liquid products, including oil and refined products, increased more than 300 percent last year. Fisher said the port has even invested in a heated

pipe transfer system that can turn the heavy Canadian crude into a form that can be easily pumped into tankers and shipped out along the Neches. Fisher said the Port of Beaumont and its Orange County Terminal are uniquely situated as the Gulf Coast has become increasingly attractive to oil producers looking for well-connected ports to ship their crude. “We have direct service from the three Class 1 railroads that are graded to handle these tankers — BNSF, Union Pacific and KCS — but they also have agreements with two of the national Canadian lines,” Fisher said. “In effect, we have access from five Class 1 railroads that can basically get a tanker from anywhere to here.” jacob.dick@beaumontenterprise.com
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