

Pecan Island residents press for answers

SpaceX faces concerns over nature, launch schedules, noise

BY JOEL THOMPSON
Staff writer

The dimly lit interiors of the closed Pecan Island High School were crowded with people Thursday afternoon, a rare occasion for any event held in the unincorporat-

ed Vermilion Parish community. There to speak to about 100 residents were representatives of SpaceX, the aerospace manufacturing company that recently announced plans to operate a rocket launch facility along the Louisiana coast.

The facility is not expected to officially open until 2029, but impacts from the announcement have already been felt by some locals. "We've seen more cars around than ever before since this announcement," one resident said.

While many details of the project's specifications have not yet been publicly revealed, representatives did provide some additional information on the initial plans that could impact nearby residents. According to SpaceX senior manager Ben Lancaster, the company eventually hopes to launch as many as 30 rockets a day, a huge increase

from the 13 test flights that have taken off out of the Starbase launch center in southern Texas. SpaceX clarified that it does not plan to launch at that rate when the facility first opens and said the number of rockets launched on a given day will be subject to further assessments.

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STAFF PHOTOS BY BRAD KEMP

Sugar cane is unloaded at the Louisiana Sugar Cane Cooperative on Friday in St. Martinville. More than 70,000 tons of sugar cane have been processed in the first 10 days of this year's grinding season.

Governor, U.S. agriculture secretary tour sugar mill

Landry discusses labor woes, rising costs farmers face

BY JOANNA BROWN
Staff writer

It's the busiest time of year at the Louisiana Sugar Cane Cooperative in St. Martinville, where more than 70,000 tons of sugar cane have been processed in the first 10 days of this year's grinding season.

The operation hosted Gov. Jeff Landry and U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins on Friday, giving the officials a firsthand look at the harvest while they discussed some of the biggest challenges facing Louisiana sugar cane farmers and agricultural producers nationwide.

The discussion focused on high diesel prices, the threat posed by the pasture



Gov. Jeff Landry, left, speaks during a news conference while U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins, right, looks on at Louisiana Sugar Cane Cooperative on Friday in St. Martinville.

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Released documents reveal Hyundai deals

Ascension Parish officials signed agreements under NDAs to compete for project

BY ANNAKATE FREELAND
Staff writer

Ascension Parish has released development agreements related to Hyundai's \$5.8 billion steel mill, detailing over \$200 million in government-built infrastructure to support industry in the area as well as the payments the company will make in place of traditional property taxes.

The documents, which were protected by nondisclosure agreements, were released Tuesday after a confidentiality period expired. The confidential agreements between parish officials and Hyundai date back to Aug. 10, 2024, seven months before President Donald Trump announced the new mill.

In a news release, Parish President Clint Cointment said the nondisclosure agreements allowed the parish to compete with surrounding states to land the project.

"We competed for one of the most highly sought-after economic-development projects in the country, and Ascension Parish won," Cointment said in the release. "We protected legitimate negotiations when confidentiality was required, followed the public process when governmental approval was required, and are releasing the documents now that the confidentiality period has ended."

Cointment could not be reached for further comment on the agreements.

The steel mill, which has yet to begin construction because it has not been granted an air permit, will supply Hyundai Motor Group's automotive plants and other original equipment manufacturers across the U.S., with the goal of using steel produced in Donaldsonville in every Hyundai vehicle assembled in America.

The mill, with an estimated completion date of early 2029, will be built on roughly 1,700 acres in the RiverPlex MegaPark. It is expected to create about 1,300 permanent jobs with

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Former provost says he clashed with Landry over tiger

Haggerty: Dispute over stadium appearance led to resignation

BY ALYSE PFEIL
Staff writer

LSU's former top academic leader said under oath that he decided to leave the university after defying Gov. Jeff Landry's controversial push to bring a live tiger back on the field during football games.

Roy Haggerty revealed new details about the high-profile dispute

during legal proceedings launched by athletes seeking to unionize at Oregon State University, where he is now provost. Haggerty was seeking to draw a contrast between his current employer, where he said academics clearly trump athletics, and LSU, where he argued sports issues exert outsized influence on university leadership. Haggerty was provost at LSU

from 2022 until 2025, when he left for the same job at OSU.

In his testimony, Haggerty said former LSU President William Tate told him and other university leaders in the summer of 2024 that "the governor had ordered him to place the live tiger on the field at LSU football games."

Haggerty said LSU's license for Mike VII, the school's live tiger



Haggerty

that if the university forced me to put the tiger on the field, I would resign," he said. "I let it be known to the president that this was inap-

propriate, illegal and immoral and a number of other objections." The disagreement "culminated in a meeting in the Governor's Office with the governor yelling," Haggerty said. "The governor eventually backed down and ordered his chief of staff to rent a tiger and have that tiger brought to LSU and placed on the field at the LSU-Alabama game in fall of 2024."

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