

Truck City to stay in Gary

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GARY | Truck City of Gary Inc. will be staying in its home city but moving to a new location to make way for expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport.

The 60-year-old business soon will begin building a new facility on a 20-acre site just off the Borman Expressway at 25th Avenue and Taft Street, about 4 miles southeast of its current location.

"We had some other options, but Mayor (Rudy) Clay worked very hard to keep us in town," said Truck City General Manager Gerri Davis. "We feel a strong sense of commitment to being in Gary and being part of the city's revitalization, and the airport is a big part of that."

The company has been owned and operated by the Davis family since its opening in 1946 at the corner of 5th Avenue and Chase Street. It moved to the current location in 1960.

The new \$5 million, 50,000-square-foot dealership and repair facility will be built by The Pangere Corp., also of Gary, Davis said. Truck City has 68 employees and hopes to add 20 to 25 more at its new facility.

Repair and maintenance technicians there are represented by Teamsters Local 142 and make wages ranging from \$30,000 to \$60,000, Davis said.

Truck City of Gary is the oldest dealer of Freightliner trucks in the United States and also sells Sterling and Western Star trucks.

"It's a win-win," airport authority lawyer Patrick Lyp said Monday. "They've been here for 60 years, and it's always best if you can keep a successful business in the city."

The complex deal that will enable the company to move, including the price for its current facility, has not been finalized. Both Lyp and Davis expressed confidence a final deal can be struck soon.

The truck dealership has to move to make way for the relocation of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway tracks, which currently carry trains just 130 feet from the northwestern end of the main runway.

The deal for the new site at 25th and Taft involves the Gary Redevelopment Commission selling 55 acres to the airport authority. The airport authority will then sell 20 acres to Truck City. Five acres of the site will be a park.

The airport authority is also buying up about a dozen other parcels northwest of the main runway, with the authority board authorizing payments totaling \$1.89 million to two property owners at its meeting Monday.

The airport authority is paying \$1.3 million to Beemsterboer Inc., of Hammond, for an aggregate facility it owns west of the airport. It is paying about \$500,000 more for crushed stone that is there.

A 6.1-acre parcel will be bought from Majestic Star Casino for \$52,000.

Almost all the money for the purchases is coming out of a special \$20 million state appropriation that is being funneled to the airport through the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority.

Three other parcels soon will be acquired through condemnation proceedings, with the authority board Monday authorizing the deposit of \$524,000 in court accounts. Those deposits will allow the airport to begin construction work on the parcels, according to Lyp.

Negotiations on the purchase of another 84-acre parcel are currently in progress, Lyp said. When that parcel is bought, the airport will have nearly all 200 acres it needs for the expansion.

In other action Monday, the airport authority board authorized increasing the fuel flowage fee it collects on each gallon of jet fuel pumped at the airport to 7 cents per gallon from its current 5 cents per gallon.

The airport projects it will collect about \$82,488 in fuel flowage fees this year. Next year, it forecasts it could collect almost twice that, based on the higher fee and the fact SkyValue airline will be operating out of the airport for at least 4 months.

Business today, runway tomorrow

The Gary/Chicago International Airport Authority has authorized buying the following parcels to make way for adding 2,000 feet to the airport's main runway and relocating a rail line. Listed are the owners followed by address, amount, acreage and authorized action.

- Majestic Star, 300 N. Burr St., \$52,000, 6.1 acres, payment authorized
- Beemsterboer Inc., 7501 W. Chicago Ave., \$1.84 million, 44 acres, payment authorized
- Tony Zaleski, east side of Cline, \$124,000, 11.3 acres, condemnation deposit
- NBD Bank Trust, east side of Cline, \$250,000, 5.45 acres, condemnation deposit
- Calumet Flexicore, 7780 W. Chicago Ave., \$150,000, 1.7 acres, condemnation deposit
- Riechman Transport Inc., 7200 W. Chicago Ave., \$87,000, N.A., offer

Source: Gary/Chicago International Airport Authority