

County adopts BASF breaks

By JOHN LOWMAN | Posted: Wednesday, July 27, 2011 2:00 am

ANGLETON — Brazoria County commissioners helped move BASF's Freeport site a step closer to a \$50 million plant expansion with approval of a tax abatement request.

The abatement is 100 percent for seven years, Brazoria County Judge E.J. "Joe" King told attendees at Tuesday's commissioners court meeting. It's on construction of a \$50 million dispersions facility to "be used for several different applications," said Chris Witte, manager of the Freeport site.

The new facility, on property already owned by the company, will use epoxyresins and materials already produced at the site for things like adhesives, ceramics, detergents, paints and other items. The abatement is a key step in the process, Witte said.

"Community support is always wonderful in the Freeport area," he said. "We're very pleased with the county's support. We're here to stay and are going to continue to grow."

The expansion will create 23 permanent jobs and about 100 during the construction phase, which is set to begin in January 2013, said Mark Damron, project lead. The facility still will be valued at \$50 million when it comes into tax rolls in seven years, he said.

The company expects to complete construction by "the latter half of 2013," Witte said. As the national economy continues to languish, Texas is growing, and he said the state has a "more positive outlook for the future.

"This is a great moment coming out of the 2008-09 recession," he said. "We hope there's more."

Lake Jackson Mayor Bob Sipple spoke in favor of the abatement. "They will not only benefit the city of Lake Jackson but the surrounding communities as well," Sipple said, adding BASF is a positive part of the area's economy.

King thanked Witte and other BASF officials for attending.

"We appreciate you being in Brazoria County and all you do for our community," King said.

Physical therapist and conservationist Melanie Oldham raised a few eyebrows when she spoke in favor of the abatement during the court's public comment period. Oldham usually is outspoken against industry.

"If there was ever a company deserving of a tax abatement, it's BASF," she said. "Each year, BASF gets better and better at reducing their environmental impact."

Also Tuesday, commissioners heard from Mike Windburn with the Gulf Coast Center, which helps handle the county's mental health cases. The Legislature originally was going to cut \$4 million from the center's funding but ended up cutting \$400,000. The shortfall likely will be made up from reserves, he said.