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Texas City Sun

Final phase of Tex Tin cleanup gets under way

By Lora Bernard

The Texas City Sun

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Ribbon-cutting ceremonies for the final phase of the Tex Tin smelter site cleanup was hailed Thursday as a milestone in the city's efforts to boost economic development.

"We hope we will be able to add another economic growth opportunity for Texas City," said Mayor Carlos Garza.

A \$100,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency will be used to determine how the site could be used. With the funds the city could hire about three consultants who could help the city work with the EPA and the community to create a redevelopment plan.

Thursday morning's ceremony marked the demolition phase of the defunct tin and smelter facility.

The Tex Tin smelter site has been the subject of ongoing cleanup efforts for more than a decade. The estimated \$28.6 million cleanup effort became a pet project for former Mayor Chuck Doyle during his administration.

When he retired, he said Tex Tin was the only disappointment he had during his reign because the smelter site was not leveled.

At Thursday's event he said the final phase of demolition marks a battle with bureaucracy that is coming to an end. The final demolition is expected to be

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completed in 2004.

"We've come a long way," he said.
"Dealing with bureaucracy is tough."

The battles included court dates, exhaustive meetings and a slew of public hearings.

In fact, in 2000 the stalled cleanup efforts so upset Doyle at one point that he erected the large sign in the city easement at the corner of FM 519 and State Hwy. 146. The sign proclaimed the responsibility of the United States government regarding the cleanup efforts and provided a phone number for citizens to call.

During that time, government agencies agreed to meet regularly with the mayor and his staff so they could monitor the cleanup progress. Those monthly meetings continue under the Garza administration.

Demolition work along the western portion of the Tex Tin Superfund site began in June 2000 after Federal Judge Sam Kent ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to secure and remove any dangling sheet metal.

The western property that once contained two large buildings now sports a clean slab.

Tex Tin was a World War II smelter site that was closed by the government following the war and purchased privately several times before it became defunct. It is a 140-acre site at the southeast corner of Highway 146 and FM 519.

"All projects have social implications," Doyle said. "Of course at that time, these issues weren't an issue. Then the environment became more of a social issue."

The current clean up phase includes collecting trash, demolishing the structures that are still on site, such as the water tower and the smokestack.

Materials that can be recycled will be collected. The acid pond will be treated and the waste piles and ponds will be

capped and the site will be prepared for new use.

Garza said the smokestack would probably be the last structure to come down.

The city is expected to have another ceremony to commemorate that event, he said.

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