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In scope, it's comparable to the city's biggest street and highway projects of the last several years.

"It's probably as big as Paseo del Norte going through Petroglyph (National Monument on the West Side) all the way to Tramway in terms of complexity and what the roadway is trying to achieve," said Sterling Mathias, a city transportation planner. "It's a big undertaking. It's going

tion and a ton of money. Maybe two tons."

The project was first envisioned in 1983, but it stalled in 1986 when the city couldn't find enough money to prepare an environmental impact statement, which is required for getting federal funding.

In late 1995, the four government bodies with an interest in the project — the city, the U.S. Air Force, the Federal High-

way and Transportation Department — teamed up to get the environmental impact statement done.

In October, the city awarded a \$400,000 contract for the environmental impact statement, expected to take two years.

Last month, a meeting was held at Wilson Middle School to gauge what the

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Sparton slapped with 2 lawsuits pushing for waste cleanup

By Ed Asher

TRIBUNE REPORTER

Two federal lawsuits were filed today in an attempt to force a West Side company to clean up groundwater contamination that threatens Albuquerque's drinking-water supply.

City and state officials have said that solvents used at a plant operated by Sparton Technology Inc. have found their way into the groundwater and could threaten wells and eventually the city's drinking-water supply.

The city of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County joined forces in one

lawsuit. A separate lawsuit was filed by the state Environment Department.

The lawsuits allege that the Sparton plant generated hazardous wastes from approximately 1961 to 1994 that have contaminated groundwater in the Albuquerque Basin aquifer.

Sparton officials said in a statement today that the company has spent more than \$6 million to analyze and "correct" contaminated groundwater.

"We will spend more to implement a solution, but that solution must be workable and affordable," the statement says. "Unfortunately, while

Sparton Technology has proposed and is willing to start such a solution, the city of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, the New Mexico Environment Department and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are not."

Sparton supported the U.S. government's military program "at the height of the Cold War," manufacturing "high-reliability switches and controls" for use by Sandia National Laboratories in developing nuclear

Please see **SPARTON/A3**

low birth-weight babies, 1994

Mothers who received little or no prenatal care, 1994

to teen-agers under 18, 1994

Youths ages 16-19 who were high school dropouts, 1990

ages 16-19 unemployed, 1990

er age 15 living in households received public assistance, 1989

Children living in poverty, 1989

Children in single-parent homes, 1990

distressed neighborhoods," 1990

50-city average

ank **B5** Local/State **A3** Nation/World **A4** Obituaries **C10** TV **D5**
..... **D1** Movies **D4** Neighborhood Trib **D2** Sports **B1** Weather **C10**

OGC-000733

Flat-broke State Fair wants in on video gaming

By Ollie Reed Jr.

TRIBUNE REPORTER

If the state legalizes gaming machines at horse-racing tracks, the New Mexico State Fair Commission wants the power to consider using those machines at the fairgrounds track.

Commissioners voted 7-0 in support of a resolution stating just that during their meeting in Las Cruces on Tuesday, State Fair Commissioner Bill McIlhane of Albuquerque said.

"We spent a considerable amount of time

talking about the gaming situation, which is on everyone's minds," McIlhane said.

Regardless of how anyone feels about the issue personally, he said, "as fair commissioners we have to be sure we get what is due the State Fair out of this."

According to McIlhane, the resolution reads, in part, "that the New Mexico State Fair Commission be authorized to consider the use of games of chance and video machines on the New Mexico State Fairgrounds to the extent that it supports the ongoing financial needs of the New Mexico

State Fair."

The financial needs of the State Fair are as much in the state news as the gaming issue these days.

After spending money on capital improvements a few years back, fair management watched horse-racing revenues — the fair's main source of revenue — fall off sharply after 1989. The result is that the fair is in an \$8 million hole.

Other forms of legal gambling have been blamed for part of the loss of horse-racing revenue, and commissioners see games of

chance at the fair as way to get some of that revenue back. The resolution approved Tuesday calls for the fair commission to maintain complete control of such games on the fairgrounds.

All of that depends on the New Mexico Legislature's legalizing gaming machines at horse tracks, and even that might not help the State Fair.

"They could make the State Fairgrounds an exception because it is on state land," McIlhane said.

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SPARTON from A1

weapons, the statement says.

The company stopped the manufacturing process that led to environmental problems in 1983, the statement says.

"Sparton has been neither reluctant nor resistant to accept its responsibility to correct the contamination. Indeed, we have acted in good faith and satisfied our obligations" under an agreement with the EPA, the statement says.

Environmental monitoring has revealed that a plume of groundwater contamination

extends horizontally from the plant for at least 2,000 feet and vertically for at least 60 feet beneath the facility into the aquifer, the suits allege.

The plume of groundwater contamination is in the immediate vicinity of existing drinking-water wells, the lawsuits say.

Sparton's operations generated metal-plating wastes and spent solvent wastes in the manufacture of electronic components, the lawsuits allege.

Last year, the state said that levels of one

solvent — trichloroethene — in the soil are 1,000 times higher than allowed and the highest levels ever found in the state. The chemical, which could seep into the groundwater, is a suspected carcinogen.

The groundwater contamination "may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to health or the environment," one lawsuit says.

The lawsuits say Sparton manufactured electronic components at the plant at 9621 Coors Road N.W. from approximately 1961

through December 1994. From October 1993 to the present, the company has continued to operate a machine shop at the facility, the lawsuits say.

Both lawsuits seek a court order that would force Sparton to clean up the contamination.

Nathan Wade, a spokesman for the state Environment Department, said Tuesday: "This isn't new. We've known for years, for over a decade, that there was contamination under their site."

COUNTY from A1

city's effort to rein in sprawl.

The differences between city and county came to a head over Westland North, a proposed 6,700-acre development by Westland Development Co. Inc. The project, which would include residential, resort, commercial and industrial-park uses, is north of Interstate 40, south of Petroglyph National Monument and west of the city limits.

Westland North would be the first to get county water and sewer service.

Westland's proposed master plan has raised concerns among city planners, who say it's at

land North to be annexed into the city.

But Westland Development Co. Inc. says it would take too long for the city to get around to providing urban services to the proposed development. Westland Development has withdrawn its application to the city for approval of its master plan and is instead working with the county. The county, meanwhile, has asked the city not to annex Westland North.

Even if the city doesn't annex the land, however, city officials say the city has jurisdiction five miles outside the city limits for

It calls for Westland to pay the costs of improving their land and for the county to absorb the cost of setting up a water and sewer utility.

Westland would transfer its water rights to the county. The company would post a \$1 million bond, in case revenue from the development would not be enough to cover paying back interest on bonds issued by the county. The \$1 million bond will be in effect for eight years, after which the county expects to break even on its utility costs.

The county promises to come up with a

start-up. The county proposes to pay for that with a \$6 million loan from the state Environment Department and by issuing \$11.5 million in revenue bonds. These would be paid back with revenue the county would get for providing water and sewer and impact fees charged to developers.

The memorandum was approved on a 5-0 vote, but some commissioners said they hoped the county's move would not undermine regional cooperation on issues like water.

"I think it's vitally, vitally important for this area that we regionalize," Commissioner Bar-