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Parish supports rum distillery grant

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The Jeff Davis Parish Police Jury voted Wednesday to endorse a grant proposal to the state by a rum distillery being built in Lacassine.

The company, Louisiana Spirits, LLC, is asking the state

for \$305,000 to help fund the construction of certain infrastructures at the 23-acre facility. The funding will cover the cost of improvements to the water and sewer infrastructure, as well as building a street extension.

The funding will come from the state's Economic Development Assistance Program (EDAP), a state incentive program, which aims to help fund projects across the state

that benefit the community with job creation and increased tax revenue.

Louisiana Economic Development (LED) Senior Director of Business Development Don Pierson said Wednesday that the grant package stipulates that the company meet set

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performance standards and job creation goals in order to avoid having to repay the \$305,000 to the state.

"This is a good, sound project," Pierson told the jurors, "one that many parishes would like to have."

Pierson said while the parish could be liable for repaying the funds in the event that the company fails, the company owners have guaranteed to pay back the grant money out of their own pockets.

"The Louisiana Spirits investors have a great track record," said Pierson. "They have paid taxes here

and been a part of Louisiana Economic Development in Louisiana for a long time. The owners are personally guaranteeing this grant package."

Louisiana Spirits partner Skip Cortese said the company plans to invest around \$5 million and hire around 39 workers. Also, the company will produce the rum using locally grown sugarcane. He also said the visitor center being built on location will help attract tourists to the parish.

"We believe this can become a destination for tourists," said Cortese, "and that is what we want."

Cortese said that with the recent rainy weather, the construction process has been delayed and that the funds would help speed up the process by funding the construction of infrastructures like a road extension.

"The location is important to the success of our goal of investing in the community of Southwest Louisiana," said Cortese, "but building our facility in a rural area with little existing infrastructure is more costly than building in town. That is why we are asking for help from the state."