

<http://www.caller.com/news/2008/jan/23/county-league-make-it-official/>

County, league make it official

Commissioners unanimously passes vote to bring Continental Baseball league team to Fairgrounds Field

By Jaime Powell/ Originally published 10:42 a.m., January 23, 2008

ROBSTOWN — Play ball, Nueces County declared, with a unanimous vote Wednesday morning to bring a Continental Baseball league team to Fairgrounds Field. "We have baseball in 2008 and we are so excited about it, baseball at the fairgrounds," said Tyner Little a special assistant to the commissioners court. Continental Baseball League president Ron Baron said his vision for the yet to be named team is bringing baseball back to what it was when he was a kid--affordable, family friendly fun, with hotdogs and soda and a team that is a part of the community.

<http://www.caller.com/news/2008/jan/23/nueces-nearing-home-on-contract/>

Nueces nearing home on contract

Officials may reach deal with baseball league today

By Jaime Powell/Originally published 05:33 a.m., January 23, 2008

It will be batter up at Fairgrounds Field, with Nueces County scheduled to strike a deal today with the Continental Baseball League to bring a franchise to Robstown. Nueces County Commissioner Oscar Ortiz, who served as lead negotiator on the contract, will lay out the plan to the Commissioners Court and a vote is on the agenda, county officials said. "I think we may have an agreement ready to go," Ortiz said Tuesday. "It is still in the legal department, but I can say it's a good contract and it provides for an opportunity for growth for the league, team and for Nueces County to recoup some of its investment." County Judge Loyd Neal has seen the drafts of the contract and supports it. County Commissioners Peggy Bañales and Chuck Cazalas said they want to see Ortiz's presentation on the contract today before making a final decision, but both expect to support it. County Commissioner Betty Jean Longoria did not return phone calls but has said recently she would support the effort.

What that means for Robstown is that a new, yet-to-be-named Nueces County team will join the league's other teams in Richland Hills, Texarkana and Texas City, in time for the start of the independent league season in May. The league will play a 72-game regular season schedule and the Nueces County team will consist of a combination of free agents, former Continental Baseball League players and several players from the Corpus Christi area, according to a statement from the league. The Continental Baseball League, which had its inaugural season last year, is a good fit for the county, Ortiz said. "I think they have the right ingredients," he said. "They have a good management team and I think that most of all, it's their willingness to be flexible towards the needs of Nueces County."

County officials have said a deal to bring a team to Robstown would hinge on whether it was more financially viable for the county. They were hoping for more than the \$5,000 a month Aviators owner Horn Chen was supposed to pay, before the team bailed out of the stadium in mid-October, owing the county money. Continental Baseball League President Ron Baron has said -- and county officials are banking on the idea -- that Baron's organization can operate in Robstown cheaper than the Aviators did. "I have not heard all of the presentation yet, but what we have been told is their salaries are less and their operating expenses are less," Neal said Tuesday. "They and we believe there is a lower threshold for break-even than the Aviators had." Neal said Monday that the proposed contract has provisions for sharing revenue and helping the county to offset the cost of operating Fairgrounds Field, and referred further questions on the details to Ortiz. Ortiz would not give further details of the potential finances involved Tuesday, and Neal, Bañales and Cazalas said they had not been privy to hard numbers.

To those who would suggest that a team in Robstown cannot compete with the Corpus Christi Hooks, Baron said the two organizations will offer different products. The Hooks have been a hit in the area, drawing an average 7,048 fans last season, dwarfing the Aviators' 1,468 average attendance in their final season last year. "We truly respect and admire the Hooks, but we believe that there is room in the market for our family friendly baseball, particularly in places like Calallen, Robstown, Kingsville and Banquete," Baron said. In the next few weeks, the organization will hold a naming contest for Nueces County's team, with details to follow within the next week or so. Baron said his league is committed to providing family friendly baseball at affordable prices, with tickets ranging in price from \$6 to \$8 and most concession items will cost well below the same items found at major league parks. Corpus Christi Hooks tickets range in price from \$5 to \$10, and the stadium also offers luxury suite seating, according to the team's web site. Baron said his organization also is committed to aggressively marketing the facility to colleges and universities when the county team is not using it and will work with high schools and youth leagues interested in using the field for overflow events such as tournaments. "We want it used more than 40 times a year," Baron said. "We will also be bidding on national events, be it amateur youth baseball or adult baseball. We are very excited about what we can do."