

# Riverfront/Classified

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1995

## Lawmakers join Owens Park board in seeking financial help from state

By Clay Redden

DAILY Capital Correspondent

MONTGOMERY — Gov. Fob James spent 25 minutes with officials of the Jesse Owens Memorial Park Board listening to their pleas for state money for the 17-acre site at Oakville.

The group asked for \$700,000, the amount needed to finish the park, but got no commitment.

"He seemed to be interested in what we're doing," said James Pinion, project director. "I believe he was aware of our efforts and

the importance of getting the park completed before the torch visit next year."

The park, which honors Oakville native and Olympic great Jesse Owens, will be one of the sites visited by runners carrying the Olympic Torch to Atlanta for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. The torch is to stop at the park June 29, 1996.

Born into a Lawrence County sharecropper's family with no bed for him and his brother to sleep on, Owens went on to single-handedly destroy Adolf Hitler's theory of Aryan supremacy in the

1936 Summer Olympics by winning four gold medals and breaking three world records.

More than 50 years later, Owens was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for humanitarian contributions.

Although Pinion and the other officials came away from the meeting without a financial commitment from James, Pinion said he has a feeling the governor will "do all he can" to provide some additional funding. He wanted to

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go over our proposal a little more and study it to determine how he can help us."

Pinion said the board needs about \$700,000 more to complete the entire park which will include a museum, pavilions, baseball field, basketball courts and an area for track and field events.

"We've spent over \$400,000 getting the park as far as we have, and we've run out of money. That's what brought us here. All that was accomplished through grants as well as some corporate and private funding," said Pinion. "This will be something the state will be

proud of, not just Oakville. We feel like if it's not completed, not only will we be embarrassed but so will the entire state."

Lawrence County's legislative delegation, Sen. Tommy Ed Roberts, D-Hartselle and Rep. Sam Letson, D-Moulton, attended the meeting.

Roberts was not available for comment afterwards but Letson said he felt good about the meeting with James.

"The governor knows the eyes of the world will be on Alabama," said Letson. "We're going to be looking at getting some money from the Department of Transportation, the Alabama Department of Community and Economic Affairs and the Alabama Olympic Committee."