

**'We're watching our dreams come true'**

**PUEBLOPLEX/**

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Board ramping up to put new plan into action

**BY CHRIS WOODKA**

**THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN**

The PuebloPlex board inched closer to taking over part of the Pueblo Chemical Depot Thursday, taking steps to move on its upcoming strategic plan as quickly as possible when it's completed in February.

"We're watching our dreams come true, which doesn't happen very often," said Eileen Dennis, who chaired the meeting. "Pueblo is at a crossroads and we have an opportunity to blossom."

But first there are a lot of seeds to plant.

The board is defining the parcels most likely to generate revenue with minimal investment to transfer sometime within the next year. About 6,400 of the 16,000 acres deemed excess property are being sought.

PuebloPlex, formed 20 years ago by the state to work with the Army in redeveloping the depot, also is targeting those properties that are not compromised by environmental cleanup issues.

The revenue-producing areas are well-defined.

PuebloPlex already has leased 234 of the 620 igloos currently available under a master lease with the Army. The 2,200-square-foot igloos lease for \$1,000-\$1,500 annually, depending on whether larger doorways have been installed. Activity has picked up since an advertising campaign began earlier this year.

The other moneymakers are leased warehouses and rail facilities, which are attracting new customers as well.

*Most of the land within this area is transferable and clean.*

**RUSSELL DESALVO PUEBLOPLEX CEO AND PRESIDENT**

The cleanup could be problematic for the south end of the depot where the access road is located. While there are no surface issues, there is a groundwater treatment program that will take the Army years to complete.

"We're not proposing ownership of utilities at this point, and no buildings other than the igloos," PuebloPlex CEO and President Russell DeSalvo said. "Most of the land within this area is transferable and

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from page 5A \_\_\_\_\_ clean.”

The board still has big challenges before it can consider taking over the entire depot. The biggest is the completion of the chemical weapons destruction, which is several years away. The demolition or reuse of the demilitarization area is up in the air.

Electric and water service must be upgraded. Roads, both the access to the depot and roads within the facility, have to be repaired.

As a fallback, PuebloPlex still has a master lease with the Army that allows it to keep half the revenues — next year’s budget is \$1.18 million — while the Army uses its share for upkeep.

Dan Schnepf, chairman and CEO of Matrix Design Group, talked to the board about “development velocity” and reviewed visits last month to the depot by three potential clients who already are interested in locating there. Tax incentives, local wage structure and access to road, rail and air service are among the most attractive elements for new business or industry.

“You’ve got elements (in the plan) to jump-start implementation,” Schnepf said.

[cwoodka@chieftain.com](mailto:cwoodka@chieftain.com)