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TEXAS

□ EL PASO: Bankruptcy

Judge accepts electric company's Chapter 11; reorganization OK'd by creditors, shareholders

By FREGY FKAC
The Associated Press

AUSTIN — A federal bankruptcy judge indicated Monday he would accept a reorganization plan for El Paso Electric Co. that includes its acquisition by Dallas-based Central and South West Corp.

"It would be appropriate to confirm the plan," said U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Frank Moore of Austin, who set another meeting for Tuesday.

The reorganization has been endorsed by the company's creditors and shareholders.

The increase is about \$133 million less than El Paso Electric believes it is entitled to over the next eight years under existing orders by state regulatory commissions, Wiggs said.

The proposal merger has been criticized by El Paso Mayor Larry Francis because of the rate increase.

"Everyone's made a compromise in this case," Wiggs said.

The plan would give secured creditors about \$1 billion. That represents 100 percent payment but a lower interest rate than they originally wanted, he said. Unsecured

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The plan includes a \$2.2 billion acquisition by Central and South West, a holding company that owns four electric utilities serving 1.6 million customers in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Arkansas. It also owns an immense natural gas pipeline company and four other subsidiaries.

"Central and South West was able to step in and pay a very fair price for the company," Wiggs said.

Wiggs also notified about an estimated total \$1.5 billion in loans that El Paso Electric's board of directors is considering paying to ensure that Wiggs, vice president Eduardo Rodriguez and executive vice president Curtis Hawkins stay with the company while it emerges from bankruptcy.

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□ DALLAS: Courts

Psychic faces bankruptcy status hearing, conviction

By PAULINE ARRILAGA
The Associated Press

DALLAS — A self-proclaimed spiritual adviser returns to court Tuesday for a hearing to reconsider her bankruptcy status following her conviction last month on bankruptcy fraud charges.

Toni Hoffman, 55, was convicted Nov. 23 on 10 counts of bankruptcy fraud, including three counts of failing to report four credit card accounts and three counts of failing to report a \$1,000 payment on one of those cards. She was acquitted on two counts.

Sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 14. Hoffman faces up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on each count.

"If Mrs. Hoffman is properly eligible to be a Chapter 13 debtor, she would be able to discharge the wrongful death obligation. She would have a much harder time getting a discharge of those wrongful death obligations under Chapter 7."

— Molly Barlow, personal bankruptcy trustee

Hoffman, who has been accused of leading a Dallas cult, also faces lawsuits accusing her of causing and benefiting from the death of 10 associates and relatives. The lawsuits consisted suicide or self-inflicted untimely deaths after willing or giving property to Hoffman.

Those lawsuits, filed in 1989 and 1990, were placed on hold when Hoffman filed for bankruptcy on Oct. 22, 1991.

Tuesday's hearing is to determine whether Mrs. Hoffman will be allowed to dismiss her Chapter 11 bankruptcy or convert it to a Chapter 7, said Molly Barlow, Hoffman's bankruptcy trustee.

Under Chapter 7, Hoffman would sell off all of her assets. Under Chapter 13, she would continue to repay as many debts as possible.

Barlow said that if the bankruptcy is converted to a Chapter 7, the hold over the pending civil lawsuits could be removed, allowing those cases to proceed.

"If Mrs. Hoffman is properly eligible to be a Chapter 13 debtor, she would be able to discharge the wrongful death obligation. She would have a much harder time getting a discharge of those wrong-

ful death obligations under Chapter 7," Barlow said.

Phillip Palmer, Mrs. Hoffman's bankruptcy attorney, did not return telephone calls by The Associated Press.

Dallas attorney Jim Barlow, who represents Hoffman's stepchildren in one of the lawsuits, said he would attend the bankruptcy hearing.

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□ AUSTIN: Crime

Teens' slaying still unsolved

The Associated Press

AUSTIN — Two years after the Dec. 6, 1991 slaying of four teenage girls in an Austin yogurt shop, the killings remain unsolved.

For 24 months Austin police have investigated one of the most notorious crimes in city history. Victims of the late-night slayings were Amy Ayers, 13, Eliza Thomas, 17, Sarah Harrison, 15, and Jennifer Harrison, 17.

"For a lot of people, they're aware it happened, but their lives can still go on," says Pam Ayers, Amy's mother. "I know they think about it, but it's not the daily agony we all have to deal with."

"Whoever did it is still out there, and it could happen again. And somebody else is going to have to go through what we're going through," she said.

The girls, two of them sisters, and all of them good friends, had gathered at a popular teen-age hangout, as I Can't Believe It's Yogurt shop where two of the girls worked. It was not a place where danger would seem to lurk, but shortly before midnight firefighters responded to a call. After dousing the fire, they discovered the bodies of the girls.

Last October, it appeared there was a major breakthrough in the investigation.

Authorities in Mexico said Police Vito Serrano, 26, had confessed to the murders, but the latter retracted, saying he was tortured by authorities and coerced into confessing to a crime he didn't commit.

Austin police say Serrano and Alberto Jimenez Cortez, 26, both of Mexico, remain suspects, but they give no indication whether they are any closer to solving the case.

"A lot of people think this is solved, because we caught the guys in Mexico," said Barbara Serna, mother of Jennifer and Sarah Harrison.

"We want people to know that there is still a \$125,000 reward for anyone who supplies information leading to someone's arrest and conviction in the case."