

# PINE BLUFF COMMERCIAL

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## Documents disclose building purchase at Port of Pine Bluff

By Michael S. Lee

OF THE COMMERCIAL STAFF

An international agri-business corporation purchased a 178,000-square-foot building located at the Port of Pine Bluff in late 2013, according to Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County documents.

The purchase is part of a \$15 million project that could see the creation of 30 to 50 jobs, according to a hand-out distributed Wednesday

at the Pine Bluff-Jefferson County Port Authority Board of Directors meeting.

The building was formerly owned by Allied Tube and the purchasing corporation was also interested in buying the remaining Allied Tube facilities at the port, according to the documents, which did not disclose the name of the company.

"They are not at the announcement stage yet because they are doing their

due diligence," said Alliance President and CEO Lou Ann Nisbett.

In other business, Port of Pine Bluff terminal manager Mike Murphy presented the 2013 tonnage report for the public terminal.

"We ended the year with a total of 58,664 tons, which is 10,000 tons less than in 2012," Murphy said. "We picked up some rice from an independent buyer, which helped to offset the drop-off some-

what."

Data provided by Murphy indicated that the terminal loaded more than 19,000 tons of bulk rice during 2013.

Murphy said the port recently loaded a trial barge with soybean meal for a Minnesota company.

"We loaded the barge, which then headed south," Murphy said. "If that was determined to have been a success, then we are looking at loading a barge per month for them."

Murphy said the terminal received more than 6,000 tons of urea fertilizer, more than 11,000 tons of vermiculite and more than 16,000 tons of steel and wire rod coils, among other items.

Murphy said port operator Kinder Morgan has authorized \$200,000 for repairs to two storage facilities.

"This is a big plus that we will be able to move forward with these repairs immediately," Murphy said.

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## **Southwind Milling announces plans for mill at Pine Bluff Port**

Special to The Commercial

Optimum Group, through an Arkansas corporation named Southwind Milling Co. LLC, is building a rice mill at the Port of Pine Bluff, according to a press release issued Monday.

The group has been farming in Delta states since 2010 and now has decided to “grow” its business by adding value to its crops.

Construction of the new mill will begin immediately at 4215 Emmett Sanders Road, in the Pine Bluff Port’s Harbor Industrial District, on property the company purchased in 2013 from the Pine Bluff-Jefferson County Port Authority. The plant will be up and running by February 2015 and will have a capacity of 12 metric tons per hour. A total of 25 jobs will be created initially.

Southwind Milling also plans to expand again at the port in the near future, doubling the capacity of this mill and building a rice flourmill. The construction of a port dock within its property is also included in the expansion plan in order to take advantage of direct barge loading capabilities and inland waterways transportation.

The group is committed to the economic development of Pine Bluff and has decided to invest a considerable amount of money on this project, said Ron Craig, project manager of Southwind Milling Co., who said the multi-million-dollar project will have a significant economic impact in Jefferson County while also fostering increased activity at Pine Bluff’s river port.

Optimum currently has its operations office on one of its farms in Jefferson County but is planning to move it closer to the rice mill property.

Optimum and Southwind’s mission is to become one of the most important agribusiness groups in the area, according to the press release.

The Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County and the Pine Bluff-Jefferson County Port Authority began working with company officials in early 2013 when they first toured the port looking for a mill site.

“This has been an impressive project from the very beginning,” said Alliance President Lou Ann Nisbett in the release, “and we’ve certainly enjoyed watching it grow in scope. I’m looking forward to seeing Southwind’s new mill take shape and to all the activity it will generate at the port.”

Also the Arkansas Economic Development Commission and the Arkansas Development Finance Authority have been very supportive with the group on this project and have financed part of the rice mill project, Craig said.

<http://pbcommercial.com/news/local/southwind-milling-announces-plans-mill-pine-bluff-port>