

# Tennessee community drops expansion bid

FAYETTEVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Don't look back, Jacksonville. Fayetteville might be gaining on you in the bid to bring NFL football to town.

But not quite yet. Fayetteville, population 7,232, has asked the NFL to withdraw its application for an expansion franchise.

That leaves the NFL with 14 prospective applicants for two franchises that are expected to begin play in 1994.

Monday was the deadline for applications, and league spokesman Greg Aiello said the NFL wouldn't know before today how many cities had followed through with their bid.

For Fayetteville, the \$100,000 application fee was a sticking point. That doesn't mean the Lincoln County Gridiron Association wasn't serious, said co-chairman Dick Farrar.

He still thinks the idea is a good one.

"We think it's time the NFL started looking outside the metropolitan areas in the United States for an expansion team," Farrar said Monday.

"We're not sure what the effect will be," he said.

Fayetteville, 70 miles south of Nashville, could have drawn from the state capitol as well as Memphis — another city hoping to hit the map

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## NFL

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with a professional sports franchise.

Farrar sent in Fayetteville's application last week without the fee. Farrar said the group will support Memphis' bid.

Applicants have until Oct. 1 to follow with their \$100,000 application fee. Half that is refundable if the bid fails.

Fayetteville wasn't the only offbeat locale to make overtures. Anchorage, Alaska, also asked for an application.

In addition to Anchorage, Nashville and Memphis, the 14 include cities like Baltimore, St. Louis and Oakland, which have lost franchises; Charlotte, N.C.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Birmingham, Ala.; Portland, Ore.; San Antonio, Sacramento and Orlando, Fla.

There was also a request for an application from a southern California group for a franchise in Hawaii.

Farrar says he'll keep pitching Fayetteville as a good site for pro ball, if not by expansion then through an owner's search for a better location.

"We may not get an NFL expansion team, but at some point in time, an owner dissatisfied with the situation of a present team may be look-

ing to relocate," Farrar said.

Within a 150-mile radius, Fayetteville touches six states and is about 30 minutes away from Huntsville (Ala.) International Airport. It's about a 90-minute drive to Nashville.

"We need something closer to rural America than the Atlanta Falcons or the Tampa Bay Buccaneers," Farrar said.

But everyone in town isn't jumping on the bandwagon. Some found the bid embarrassing, said David Hamilton of the Lincoln County Industrial Development Board.

"A lot of people think it's got potential. Others think it makes us look like a hick town," Hamilton said.

Hamilton's office provided some demographic information for the bid but declined to draw up the material for the application.

"I feel like it's a waste of my time. We had better things to do than that. If he was going to put \$100,000 in escrow account, it would be different."

Farrar says there's more than one way to get an NFL team. And, no, he doesn't think Nashville is necessarily a more likely candidate.

"When Dick Fulton was Nashville mayor, he gave the NFL a real hard look. They decided to put their proposed stadium 70 miles southwest of Nashville," Farrar said.