

**COMMITTEE WILL MEET THURSDAY**

**Panel Seeking Comment On Brunswick County's Library System**

BY TERRY POPE

Plans to reorganize Brunswick County's library system will go to a public hearing next week.

A committee of county and Southport officials will listen to ideas Thursday, Dec. 19, at 6:30 p.m. in the old county courthouse on East Moore Street in Southport.

"There's a little bit of a consensus that we just need a county library system," said District 3 County Commissioner Gene Pinkerton, who serves on the committee chosen to study the library dispute.

Also on the committee are District 2 Commissioner Jerry Jones and Southport Aldermen Mary Childs and Nelson Adams.

Brunswick County Commissioners asked that the two aldermen and two commissioners meet to try to decide which of the two boards should oversee construction of a \$217,000 Leland area library. The committee met for an hour last week and decided it wanted to hear more from the public.

"There's only one library system per county recognized by the state," said Pinkerton.

In Brunswick County, that system is now the Brunswick County Library system, with six trustees chosen by the City of Southport and six by the county.

Earlier this year, plans to construct a Leland area library stalled after trustees and Leland officials became deadlocked over who should sign the construction agreement and retain ownership of the building.

Edith Tillman, chairman of the Leland library building committee, said she plans to have her Leland delegation at the public hearing.

"We've been waiting five years," said Ms. Tillman, who headed the drive to fund the project.

She asked commissioners last week if the dispute can be settled before Dec. 31. State Library Director Howard McGinn has reportedly told Leland officials that a \$50,000 state grant would be forfeited if building contracts are not signed by then.

"I put that question squarely to Mr. McGinn and have not gotten an answer," said County Attorney David Clegg.

The county alone cannot reorganize the library system, said Clegg, for it will take cooperation between Southport and county leaders.

"We are inextricably woven together in this," said Clegg. "I don't think action by this board (commissioners) alone can solve anything."

Following last week's committee meeting, Pinkerton predicted it wouldn't take long for members to agree on a plan.

"Naturally, they (Leland residents) want us to get in a hurry to settle this thing," said Pinkerton. "At the same time, I don't think we need to rush to put out the fire every time a little blaze breaks out."

At issue, Pinkerton said, are how trustees will be chosen for a new board, how it will be financially structured and how library employ-

ees fit into the puzzle.

Pinkerton said he believes residents will favor a county system in which each town in the county is represented on the library board instead of Southport holding half the seats.

"Obviously, the county will provide most of the funding," said Pinkerton.

Presently, the county provides a large part of annual local funding, with Southport pitching in \$20,000 for the main branch, Shallotte \$5,500 for the West Brunswick

branch and the county \$125,000 overall. State grants also help fund the library system.

The need for a county system surfaced when trustees learned they could not legally own buildings or land where libraries are built, leaving up in the air the issue of who should take over construction of the Leland branch.

Some legal issues must also be resolved under a new county system. State law indicates land donated to a library board belongs to the county,

said Clegg. Southport holds a title to the Southport branch, trustees hold a title to the land in Leland where the new library is to be built, he said, and Shallotte holds a title to the West Brunswick branch.

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**Board Adopts Plan**

The state Board of Transportation Friday adopted a \$4.7 billion update of its long-range transportation plan.

The new Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP, includes an extra \$20 million for a U.S. 17 bypass around Wilmington, the Northern Outer Loop, that would connect I-40 with U.S. 17. The money is for construction in federal fiscal year 1998, the second year of work on the project.

Also, the TIP delays by one year start-up on a second bridge to Oak Island from 1995 to 1996. The project will cost an estimated \$4.2 million.

The plan deletes about \$9 million of construction funding for a planned high-rise bridge to Sunset Beach, budgeting instead \$1.8 million for an environmental impact study ordered by the court.

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