

# BCC, School Leaders Discussing Math/Science Technology Center

BY SUSAN USHER

A proposed math/science technology center is getting a closer look this week from two local educational institutions.

Following an exploratory meeting earlier this month on the possible joint venture, officials of the Brunswick County Schools and Brunswick Community College were to meet Wednesday to discuss in greater detail the proposed center, its mission, organization and staffing. school board attorney Glen Peterson reported Monday night at the school board's regular meeting.

The meeting which was held in the media center at North Brunswick High School.

More than 100 parents, school employees and others packed the center, in sharp contrast with the last such board meeting held at a Leland area school. That last meeting was attended only by meeting regulars.

#### More Details Sought

While generally supportive of the proposal, said Peterson, college officials said more information on the organization of the proposed center is needed before BCC could endorse the project or take part in it fully.

Participants in Wednesday's meeting in addition to Peterson were to be Superintendent of Schools P.R. Hankins, BCC President W. Michael Reaves, Board of Education Chairman Donna Baxter, and BCC Board of Trustees Chairman David Kelly.

They will be reviewing bylaws and organizational materials for a center at Aiken, S.C., that is the model for the local proposal, as well as proposed mission statements being drafted by the BCC staff.

Only after this group reaches consensus, indicated Peterson, would any recommendations be presented to their respective boards, such as a barebones outline for the center or appointment of an organizing committee.

In response to questions from board member Robert Slockett, who has pushed for establishment of such a center, Peterson said the director of the Aiken, S.C., center would be contacted later in the organizational process and that initial staffing needs would be considered at Wednesday's meeting.

Slockett said he thinks it is "over-ridingly important" that a full-time director for the center be hired immediately.

#### Letters Worked

High attendance at Monday's meeting was attributed to a letter sent to parents from the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) of the three local schools urging a show of support for the PTAs at the board meeting.

"You have tremendously shown

your support," Lincoln Primary School PTA President Tina Childs told the group, saying the PTA would forward to the school board at a future meeting concerns and needs relating to the local schools.

Her comment came after one audience member questioned the agenda, saying he thought most of those present were interested in discussion of an "imbalance of distribution of equipment" among the county's schools.

Ms. Childs asked that the parents meet with PTA officials separately while the board was in executive session, behind closed doors.

Leland Middle School PTA President Glenda Browning said the group agreed that it would talk together, identify parents' concerns and needs, then find positive ways to address them.

#### Finding Solutions

"We're going to find solutions, not just point fingers," she said.

Like her, said North Brunswick High's PTSO President Polly Grady, some of the parents are "frustrated," wanting to help improve their children's schools and not always knowing how to go about it.

"It doesn't matter who you are or what you have, everybody wants something better for their children," she continued. "The PTA is going to be the vehicle for making requests to the board, but we realize we're not always going to get everything we ask for."

The PTAs plan to appear before the school board at a Feb. 8 policy workshop.

According to Ms. Childs, the high turnout reflects changes in the overall northern Brunswick County area—greater organization of its residents, emerging of new leadership and increased involvement and interest in improving the community as a whole.

An increased level of parental involvement in the schools is evidenced in volunteers painting cafeterias at both Lincoln Primary and Leland Middle schools, participation in parenting workshops and in other PTA functions.

"We know we're not at par with some of the other schools and it's time to get on track. I think that's what we're ready to do," she said. "We want to find out ways to help the schools improve."

As an example, she cited one parent who recently videotaped activities at Southport Elementary School, just to give fellow PTA members a glimpse of what their own local school could be like.

#### Other Business

In other business the school board:

■ Set a workshop Saturday, Feb. 8, starting at 8 a.m. to review proposed

policy changes. The board's next regular meeting is Feb. 3 at 6:30 p.m. at the central office.

■ Announced it would present its five-year construction plan to the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners at that board's regular meeting Tuesday, Jan. 21, at 6:30 p.m. in the commissioners' chambers at the Brunswick County Government Center. The plan calls for expansion and renovation of North Brunswick High School and construction of a new elementary school in the north attendance area, among other projects.

■ Adopted a resolution from the North Carolina Parent Teacher Association supporting mandatory drug and alcohol testing of bus drivers. Brunswick County already has a testing program in place.

■ Heard from Assistant Superintendent Bill Turner that the school system is recommending that the state Department of Transportation install flashing lights at two Leland area intersections, U.S. 74-76 and Lanvale Road and Old Fayetteville Road and Lanvale Road.

■ Heard from Turner that construction of bleachers at North Brunswick High School will begin before Jan. 28 and will be completed within 90 days. This schedule should allow the school more time to raise its \$25,000 share of the project cost.

■ Heard that the central office

School Improvement Team will make presentations at each county school over the next few weeks, followed by a retreat for school principals and their School Improvement contact persons and then organization of similar teams by each school.

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