Oconee library board, USDA official to meet

Leaders to talk about funding for $8.9M branch in Seneca

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WALHALLA — Oconee County Public Library officials are not giving up on getting federal funding to build a branch in Seneca.

John Adams, chair of OCPL's Capital Projects Committee, said Wednesday that local library leaders will meet with the U.S. Department of Agriculture area director in Columbia to discuss funding options.

Oconee's application for a $2.8 million USDA grant recently failed to make the cut of projects to be funded with federal stimulus money.

Library officials were counting on the grant, along with a low-interest $5.6 million USDA loan, to build a proposed $8.9 million library on the grounds of Blue Ridge Elementary School in Seneca.

Adams said that library officials will schedule a meeting with USDA Area Director Jesse Risher.

Risher sent Adams a message stating that his office would be able to work with the library board to fund the Seneca library project this year.

According to Adams, however, Risher said that the level of grants available for the Community Facility projects would "not reach the level of the $2.8 million" that Oconee requested.

"We will be contacting applicants directly to discuss alternatives within the next week," Risher wrote to Adams.

The USDA announced late last month that $15 million was awarded to build and enhance libraries throughout 30 states. The $15 million came from $100 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding earmarked for the rural library initiative.

Bamberg and Richland counties received funding for their library projects, but Oconee's application was not funded.

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