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# the PAPER

TM

Vol. 37, No. 24

www.the-papers.com

114 W. Market, Warsaw, Indiana 46580

**Speak Out...**  
Dog lovers concerned

After reading the article about inhumane kennels, I just wonder if there isn't something those... See Page 4

**Neighbor...**



Warsaw resident Gina Voelz began working as the new program officer for Kosciusko County Community Foundation about five weeks ago. "I'm really excited to be able to see good things happen in the community," Voelz said, referring to... See Page 2

**Good Neighbors...**  
Cast-iron kettle

Good neighbors: There is a good chance you can "save" your kettle...

## Fate of libraries up to governor's commission

By **MARTHA STOELLING**  
Staff Writer

How important are Kosciusko County's public libraries to the communities they serve? Is there a need for so many libraries? Are there more efficient ways for them to be administered? Are they taking up too much of the tax dollar?

These are just some of the questions the bipartisan Blue Ribbon Commission for Local Government Reform, appointed by Gov. Mitch Daniels in July, is asking as it researches every form of government in Indiana that receives property tax dollars.

The commission's recommendations will be given in December. This could affect everyone in the state if the Indiana General Assembly enacts laws based on the commission's findings.

The commission seems to be a response on the governor's part to the public outcry about property taxes. A recent meeting of northern Indiana head librarians with a representative of the Indiana State Librarian...



ing with the commission, sparked some concern.

The proposals included eliminating libraries that serve under 10,000 people, merging two or more local libraries or forming countywide library systems. The only library left in the county under the first proposal would be the one in Warsaw.

Kosciusko County has seven public library systems: Warsaw Community; Bell Memorial, Mentone; Pierceton-Washington Township; North Webster Community; Syracuse-Turkey Creek Township; Milford; and Nappanee (part of Nappanee is in Kosciusko County). Some areas of the county are not served at all by a tax-supported public library.

Indiana's public libraries only account for 3.3 percent of the property tax levy.

Three of the top 25 libraries in Indiana, in circulation per capita, are in the county. They are Mentone, Warsaw and Milford.

What do local head librarians think about the ideas being put before the commission? Lorna Klein is the director of the Mentone library. She comments, "Bigger is not necessarily better. We are a bridge to learning and the world to the community through our free programs and computer use as well as all the materials we have. Obviously, the community appreciates and uses us as we are first in the state in circulation per capita, and that figure does not reflect all the Tippecanoe Valley school students who come all the time. The

## Co. purchases church . . .

The county has agreed to purchase the First Christian Church, located at 202 W. Main St. in Warsaw, for \$300,000. The real estate sales agreement was signed at the Oct. 2 commissioners meeting and the closing date will be July 1, 2008.

"We were able to . . . See Page 28

*Inside*

## Looking For A Place To Dine Out? Check Out Our Featured Restaurants.

See Page 6

## It's Breast Cancer Awareness Week.

See Pages 12 and 13

**HEART OF THE AREA** — The Bell Memorial Library, Mentone, the most used library in the state per capita, is a prototype of how vital a small town, rural library can be to the community. It shares its modern facility in a repurposed building with a day care and a senior center. (Photo by Martha Stoelting)

is a process of throwing all the ideas out on the table and taking a look at them. Libraries do need to consider other methods of financing. If the amendment to the state constitution is repealed regarding property taxes, more creative and innovative forms of funding could be looked at."

Sen. Ryan Mishler noted, "First of all, any changes will have to go to the legislature. How do we provide necessary services with the best use of funds is the question to be answered. I personally would not be in favor of eliminating libraries."

The Blue Ribbon Commission is headed by former Gov. Joe Kernan and Indiana Supreme Court Justice Randall Shephard. Members include Sue Anne Gilroy, former Secretary of State; Dr. Adam Herbert, former president of Indiana University; Louis Mahern, former state senator; Ian Rolland, retired chairman of Lincoln Financial Group; and John Stafford, director of community research, IPFW. They can be contacted at [lgreform@iu.edu](mailto:lgreform@iu.edu) or by calling (317) 261-3025 and leaving voice mail.

One of four sessions the Blue Ribbon Commission is having throughout the state in October was held yesterday (Oct. 9) at the new Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne.

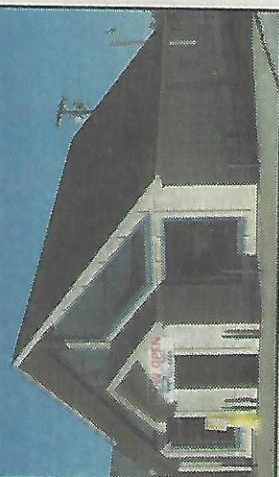
library is the last hope of small, rural communities. Who will absorb the debt many bigger libraries have, but small ones do not if some consolidation, even of services, occurs?"

"I hope the commission keeps in mind the community nature of libraries in their considerations. We'll know more when the recommendations are made. Our director, Ann Zydek is on a state task force about unserved areas which, I believe, the commission may also consider," notes Joni Brookins, assistant director of the Warsaw Community Public Library.

Some state legislators were also asked to comment. Rep. David Wolkins said, "We are in a property tax crisis. Libraries will certainly have input in the process. The commission wants to look at everything before any changes will be made. Then, of course, the legislature would have to pass bills to change how things are done."

"We don't want to lose any libraries in small communities. Library boards are the only government entity that is appointed and can levy taxes. But, all we can do is try to keep our ears to the ground and listen to the rumblings about local libraries," expressed Rep. Bill Friend.

Rep. Bill Ruppel commented, "This



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