ARCHITECT SELECTED
Planning Work Begins
For Local Civic Center

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A pre-design committee was scheduled to meet for the first time this morning to start mapping out plans for the proposed $24 million Civic Center to be built on USL property.

Such a meeting had hinging on the appointment of an architect for the project by the state Architectural Selection Board.

The board voted 4-3 in Baton Rouge yesterday to name architects Nehrbass and Lee to handle the project. The committee will meet with Nehrbass and Lee to provide information about what features the civic center should contain.

"This is the first time we've had to sit down and talk with an architect, which is something we've needed to do," Breaux said. "We're gonna see what kind of information he can provide."

The mayor's assistant said he hopes the committee will be able to set up a timetable for the project during today's session.

In Baton Rouge yesterday, the Architectural Selection Board hit a snag after voting to appoint Nehrbass and Lee when another architect claimed that that firm had failed to list a state project on its application. In vying for the appointment, firms are required to list all state projects they have been awarded within the past three years.

But Breaux said the problem revolved around a "technicality." Nehrbass and Lee did not list a recent project concerning the Jackson Barracks in New Orleans, he explained, because a contract to begin that work has not received final approval.

The board had not adjourned when the question about the application was raised, so chairman George Jackson of Shreveport asked if any wanted to change their votes. None did.

There are six members on the board. The seventh vote is cast by the "user agency" – in this case, USL, Raymond Moore, USL's director of engineering services, voted in favor of Nehrbass and Lee.

"My main concern was whether the project would be delayed any more," Breaux commented. "I'm glad it's settled. It was time to get it over with."

The State Bond Commission will meet next Tuesday and will consider a joint use agreement between USL and the city. At the request of the Attorney General's office, it has been rewritten to further spell out the financial arrangements involved.

"I talked to the AG's office yesterday and they're gonna recommend approval," Breaux said.

Legislators have been polled by mail to determine if they want to raise the funding priority for the civic center. Those ballots are due back Wednesday.

"Then we'll see if they change the priority from five to two," Breaux said. "If that's done, we'll be in hog heaven."