

Freeport High School construction within budget, on schedule

By Larry Grand lgrard@keepmecurrent.com | Posted: Thursday, March 3, 2016 11:26 am

New bathrooms are near the top of the list when it comes to spending \$622,000 in extra funds when the \$14.6 million Freeport High School renovation project came in under estimates.

John Simoneau, chairman of the Freeport High School Building Advisory Committee, said that the new bathrooms, located in the original 1961 section of the school, near the library, will be built during summer renovations, either this year or in 2017. Sheridan Corp. is the general contractor for the project, which includes a sweeping renovation of the original building and a two-story addition where the industrial arts building was razed earlier this winter.

“One of the biggest things we’re looking at is those bathrooms,” Simoneau said. “That’s a biggie. It’s a hot-button issue within the community. We feel that’s one of the best uses of the extra funds that became available.”

Simoneau said that the bathrooms near the library were not in the final design issued for bid. They have been part of the committee’s recommendations from very early on, but had been dropped in cost-control efforts, he said.

He said another item coming up is furniture.

“We should be getting an update on the purchasing process,” said Simoneau. “Generally, the original plan had new furniture for spaces in the addition and the spaces being moved during the renovation. We are now looking at some additional spaces such as the library and existing classrooms. The goal is to replace furniture if new furniture would improve the function of the space. So classroom furniture and library furniture are some of the first things we are looking at.”

The Freeport High School Building Advisory Committee meets monthly. A construction team subcommittee, which includes Simoneau; Superintendent Ed McDonough; Kelly Wentworth, RSU 5 director of finance and human resources; and Dennis Ouellette, director of facilities and transportation, meets monthly with Sheridan Corp. officials in the job trailer behind the high school.

Simoneau, from Durham, is project manager for capital construction at Bowdoin College.



Freeport High addition

Sheridan Corp. already has erected most of the structural steel for the new Freeport High School building.

McDonough agreed with Simoneau on the importance of the bathrooms, which are old and rundown throughout the school.

“John’s right on the money,” McDonough said. “We’re fortunate to have that (extra) money.”

McDonough said the renovation – a nearly two-year project with occupancy expected in the fall of 2017 – is on schedule.

“So far, so good,” he said. “We’re within budget and on schedule. Conditions have been right this winter.”

Ouellette said that while the mild winter has helped, much credit goes to Sheridan Corp. and its project superintendent, Jim Nichols.

“They have a very skilled project superintendent and some good workmen out in the field,” Ouellette said. “The experience that they have – they don’t get worked up. They have a good recovery when they find something wrong. We’ve had very few problems.”

Sheridan has erected most of the structural steel for the new building, and will finish that up in a month or so, Simoneau said. Exterior wall work will begin late in March, and the addition walls should be closed up in a couple of months, he said.

“Over the summer, we’ll be doing the first phase of inside renovation,” Simoneau said. “All of the oldest parts of the school are getting upgrades. Pretty much all of the classrooms will be upgraded in some fashion.”

The science lab, built in the early 1990s, is not up for significant renovation.

The Freeport High cafeteria will be moved into the first floor of the new building, and the new food court will be ready by the spring of 2017, Simoneau said.

“It’s going to be a nice space,” he said. “That’s going to be a drastic transition from what they have currently. It will be brighter, with a better flow, and a little more space.”

Simoneau said that the building committee also is looking for an update on the status of security improvements, which will include automatic locking capabilities on some doors and security camera placement.