



\$73.85 million Chambersburg Area Senior High School project is on time and on budget

By ROB LUFF Staff writer

CHAMBERSBURG -- A tight budget has helped construction managers keep Chambersburg Area Senior High School's expansion on target with financial expectations and scheduling, officials say.

"At this time we're right on our target for our budget," Kevin Weller, construction projects manager for Chambersburg Area School District, said.

So far, the district has paid for nearly \$31 million of the \$73.85 million project budget between construction costs, architectural fees and similar "soft" costs.

The actual construction costs come to a budgeted total of \$67.2 million.

The overall budget allows \$2.38 million in a contingency fund to cover unforeseen costs and on-the-fly changes to the contracts, known as change orders.

Nearly halfway through the project, the district has spent \$597,000 of that fund. Most of those extras were in soft costs, overruns or

miscellaneous fees, such as insurance, while \$22,500 of it was in change orders.

"That's a remarkable number," because a project of such scope usually has more change orders than that, Weller said. That number is less than 0.04 percent of the construction budget.

Weller is keeping a close eye on the contingency fund, knowing that more of it will be needed when renovations start on the older portions of the building next year. Those repairs tend to involve more unexpected costs, he said.

The district floated a \$10 million bond last September to finance the first part of the project, and will float another this July.

The amount of July's bond will depend on the interest rates at that time, Weller said. The district would need to borrow around \$20 million to cover the remaining cost of the high school. If rates are favorable, CASD would borrow more to cover construction costs at Franklin County Career and Technology Center.

That project, a combination of renovations and the construction of a new CASD-only academic wing, will go to bid at the end of November. Construction is slated to start in March.

Weller said none of the projects he has managed for CASD have gone over budget, and he expects the same for CASHS.

Fayetteville Elementary School, completed in 2007, came close due to an additional 1.59

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percent cost in change orders, but it was "right on budget."

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Benjamin Chambers Elementary School opened last December, having come in under budget due to low bids and a familiar design. It was based on Fayetteville's design, so planners and contractors knew what to expect and very few change orders came in.

"The way we're building the buildings is why we saved (money) on Ben Chambers," Weller said.

The CASHS project should finish in January 2011.

"Everything is on schedule," Weller said.

The new gymnasium is now mostly finished, and will be opened by the end of July. Now the current focus of the project is on building new classrooms and a music wing. Crews will tie them on to the existing auditorium, creating a loop that will enclose a courtyard.

They will work through the year to finish the classrooms by next May. High school administrators will be displaced this summer through the following school year, so they will have cubicles in the old gym.

So far, the main focus of the project has been on new construction, which began last year. When all of the new building is finished, crews will start renovating the older parts of the original building.

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