Still on track



JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Construction workers lay block earlier this week during construction of the new Walhalla High School. District officials estimate that half a million pieces of block will be used in construction of the school.

New Walhalla High showing signs of progress

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — From roofing to walls that are popping up, construction of the new Walhalla High School on S.C. Highway 11 is plainly visible to motorists passing by.

"All the trades have been working," said Michael Thorsland, assistant superintendent for the School District of Oconee County. "The roofing stages, plumbing and electrical has all been going full bore."

There are currently anywhere from 130-140 workers on the site, and officials say that number is quickly escalating. They say the number could increase to as many as 250 by the time the project ends in the summer of 2015.

For the past several days,

SEE WALHALLA, PAGE A5

WALHALLA: Majority of building should be 'in the dry' by summer

FROM PAGE A1

large pieces of steel have been moved for placement of the roof. That, according to Trehel Construction project architect Brian Miller, is the first step toward taking weather out of the equation.

"The majority of the building should be in the dry by the beginning of summer, but it will be close," said Miller.

Miller added the new school will feature approximately 60 classrooms overall, with some 750 tons of steel and a half million pieces of block used.

During a recent tour of the facility Thorsland conducted for The Journal, the assistant superintendent said the gymnasium area will contain built-in seats behind the backboards and bleachers that come down from the tall walls on both sides. The top of the gymnasium will feature a walking path that circles it.

"From the top down, it will seat just under 2,000," said Thorsland. "That's more than double what they can currently seat which, right now, is less than 1,000. I've been to games in the current gym when they had to close the ticket gate because they had more people coming than they could accommodate."

Thorsland said the new school's gymnasium will also feature a 94-foot floor — larger compared to the 84-foot court the school now uses for basketball.

"Most high schools and colleges play on a 94-foot court, so this will be a nice change for them," he said.

In addition, Thorsland said plans call for the new Walhalla High to have a second, smaller gym featuring about 300 seats that could be used to host junior varsity games or volleyball. The gym will be similar to the one Seneca High now has and that the district also hopes to construct at West-Oak High in the near future.

The benefit of a smaller gym, Thorsland pointed out, is that it provides greater flexibility for girls' and boys' junior varsity and varsity basketball teams and the boys' wrestling teams to practice.



Construction continues at the new Walhalla High School, located on S.C. Highway 11, and officials say the building is still on target to open in August 2015.

JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Also featured at the new Walhalla High will be a cafeteria located in the front and lobby area of the school. Thorsland said visitors will enter the lobby and see the auditorium on one side, the gymnasium on the other and the cafeteria directly facing them. The band area will also be located in front of the school.

The second floor will feature 12 science rooms and nine science labs, with six of the rooms sharing three labs and six having their own lab. There will be a walkway on the second floor as well.

The courtyard at the new school will enable students to eat lunch outside and a canopy will be featured to protect them from the elements. The auditorium area will feature 750 seats, with 500 in the balcony and the remaining 250 on the floor, and all fine arts rooms surrounding it.

"None of the auditoriums (in the school district) are big enough to seat the entire student body, but the gymnasiums are," Thorsland said.

In the new media center, which will sit directly on top of the administrative offices, Thorsland said "a lot of glass" will be featured. That will include a window enabling people to view Highway 11 north toward the mountains.

"They'll have some great views of the mountains," Miller said.

Officials said the student parking lot will contain more than 500 parking spaces, nearly the same amount as Seneca High School.

Thorsland also conducted a tour of the school's athletic facilities. He said fencing is being installed at the practice fields and that will especially be helpful for the soccer fields, located in the rear of the school, but whose steep hill has nothing to prevent balls from rolling down.

The practice fields will see Bermuda grass planted with the hopes of having it ready for use next year.

During a look at the new football stadium, where the scoreboard is already standing, Thorsland said a fieldhouse will be located next to it.

"The stadium will seat 4,500, which is enough to host any playoff game needed for 3A," Thorsland said.

Another advantage of the new site is the ability to have all spring sports together on one site.

"We will have all our spring sports together, including tennis, softball, baseball and track and field," he said. "The convenience of that is we will only need one building for restrooms."

The new school is scheduled to open in August 2015.

goliver@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6687
Follow on Twitter @JournalGO