

Architect presents drawings for new Seneca Middle

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — The architect for the new Seneca Middle School project said the nearly 170,000-square-foot building will hold up to 1,200 students when it opens in three years. Joel Carter of Jumper

Carter Sease in Columbia told School District of Oconee County board trustees that the project on Wells Highway is projected to hold 850 students when it opens in August 2024. "That number's going to change back and

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District aiming to spend \$46M

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forth a little bit depending on the time of year and such and with folks moving in," Carter said. "So we've got plenty of room there on day one."

CAMPUS FEATURES

Carter said the campus, which will be located approximately a mile from Seneca High School along Wells Highway and close to all three Seneca elementary schools, will feature three classroom wings.

There will be a wing each for the sixth grade, seventh grade and eighth grade, with 14 classrooms per wing and the ability to expand each wing.

All three grades will have science labs, while the eighth-grade wing will feature an agriculture lab. A secured greenhouse will be included as part of the agriculture lab.

Also included in the master plan are roughly 250 parking spaces. While Carter said that might not sound like a lot, "that is ample spaces for a middle school of this size."

Carter said the facility will be one story with a 1,200-seat gymnasium, 350-seat cafeteria and practice football field. A track is also planned, but Carter said it may not be asphalt in the first year.

Outside the cafeteria

Corridor hallways will allow enough space for students to adhere to social distancing.

"We've been doing this in our school designs for roughly 10 years, so it helps us with students bumping elbows by allowing a little more space," he said.

TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Carter said traffic entering the property will come from Wells Highway onto Jamesway Drive. He added there will be plenty of stacking space, so cars don't back out to Wells Highway.

"The (S.C. Department of Transportation) frowns on that, and we've actually worked with DOT to make sure we have stacking available for that," Carter said. "Students and bus riders will be dropped off at the same location, which will take you through the gym entry. They can go to their classrooms, and we felt like having that common entry was very important."

Carter said that while two-story buildings were examined, officials decided that wasn't the right fit "for this particular area, especially for the middle school."

Seneca Middle principal Darrell McDowell, district superintendent Michael Thorsland, associate su-

felt very comfortable with this particular design."

Carter said one COVID-19-related feature of the new school is the addition of a "sick room" for students who become ill with the flu, fever or COVID-19. There will also be a wellness room for students needing daily medication, such as insulin for diabetes.

"The (sick) area will have two cots kind of to the side,"

in property assessments. As a result, it significantly lowered the amount of 8 percent money available for the district. The term "8 percent money" refers to a statement in the South Carolina Constitution that allows school districts to borrow up to 8 percent of the assessed value of real property in the district to fund the construction of school buildings.

"We want it to be a won-