

JCPS high school staffs moving in

Renovated, new buildings prepare for students' arrival next week

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- By Phillip Sitter phillip@newstribune.com

With school set to start Aug. 27, Jefferson City Public Schools' two high school projects are on time and under budget, school officials said Tuesday as they showed the projects on tours. Local media members were given tours of Jefferson City High School and Capital City High School on Tuesday.

Both schools are a mix of having some areas that are still under construction or renovation, with most other areas either finished or having the finishing touches applied.

The two high school projects won't be fully completed until early 2020, but both buildings will be open for students next week.

Both high schools' staff were able to start moving in for the first time Monday. At JCHS, student council members and other students were on hand to help, JCHS Assistant Principal Jacob Adams said, and custodians assisted at CCHS, Principal Ben Meldrum said.

Adams and Meldrum highlighted new classroom furniture and room and floor layouts designed to encourage flexibility and collaboration at each of their buildings.

At JCHS, Adams took the group of reporters, district officials and builders on tour through a couple classroom hallways, past the school's cafeteria — with “more like a restaurant feel than anything else,” he said — into the renovated main gym and then through the connector between JCHS and Nichols Career Center that's still under construction.

“In bringing people around the building, people that haven't seen this project throughout the summer, this has been one of the big ‘wow’ spots,” Adams said of the renovated main gym.

“People walk in and you just see their jaws drop, because it's like ... a completely new place. We didn't add seats, we didn't do anything different, but people think that we've doubled the square footage of the place,” he said.

The connector between JCHS and Nichols, JCHS' new practice gym and storm shelter are planned to be completed in October, with final classrooms finished in January 2020.

At CCHS, Meldrum also led the tour group through classroom hallways and the cavernous main spaces of the building.

“We tried to create a very collaborative delivery model, but our building kind of hindered that at times, so that’s one of the many perks of this new building,” he said of CCHS compared to the former Simonsen 9th Grade Center from which he came.

Band, choir and orchestra classes will be held in traditional classroom spaces for the first semester while fine arts classrooms are completed at CCHS, said JCPS chief financial and operating officer Jason Hoffman.

CCHS’ gyms, theater and shops are also planned to be completed in December.

The school’s outdoor athletic facilities were viewable from the windows of a large classroom on one of the upper floors.

JCPS Superintendent Larry Linthacum said there’s no sense of a timeline yet for the second phase of the athletic facilities, but an athletic facilities focus group is looking into it.

CCHS will open with practice fields, but the intent for phase two is to have baseball/softball, football and soccer fields that could host competitions.

Hoffman said the school’s tennis courts will be able to host competitions as soon as the courts are finished.

He also said the two high school projects are about \$1 million under budget, because of contingency funds that have not been used.

Hoffman added there are other contingency funds in the budget that would be returned to the district if not used, so he anticipated the projects would probably be more than \$1 million under budget.

He said the district has a six-month contract that started about April for storage space at the former Sears store at Capital Mall — storage for items that were moved out of JCHS during renovations, along with new athletic and fine arts equipment and other items.

Hoffman said the district was initially paying \$5,000 a month for 10,000 square feet of storage space, but after the May 22 tornado made Simonsen no longer suitable as storage space, the district is now paying \$7,500 a month for 15,000 square feet.

He said the storage contract could be extended on a monthly basis, but the space paid for could be scaled back as needed.

Hoffman said Cavalier Drive — the new street that leads to CCHS by connecting Mission Drive and Frog Hollow Road — cost \$1.2 million.

That means, as part of an agreement with Jefferson City and Cole County that reimburses the district for up to \$1.5 million for the new street, JCPS will have about \$300,000 to spend on improvements to Lewis and Clark Drive and Union Street, as well as the construction of

enhanced crosswalks on Jackson Street at Thorpe Gordon Elementary School and on Linden Drive at South Elementary School.

As for the public's chance to see the district's two high schools, JCPS will release a "walk-through" video this week that will "allow community members to see project status as of Aug. 14, 2019," according to a news release Tuesday from Ryan Burns, JCPS director of communications.

Community open house events for the high schools are being planned for Sunday, Jan. 12, 2020. "The public will be invited to a ribbon-cutting ceremony and self-guided tours at Jefferson City High School at 1 p.m. and Capital City High School at 3 p.m." on that date, with more details to be released, according to the news release.