

Thursday, December 23, 2010

Justice center nearing completion

By **SANDY BENSON**

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VALENTINE — The construction of Cherry County's new \$6 million Justice Center is moving right along.

Cherry County Commissioner Mark Adamson invited fellow members of the Niobrara Council to tour the facility after a recent council meeting.

The building, connected to the annex of the Cherry County courthouse, will replace the older main building that currently houses courtrooms and court offices.

It will also replace the current sheriff's office and jail now located in the basement of the annex. The other county offices will remain in the existing annex.

When complete, the facility will house both county and city law enforcement staff and their joint dispatch, a 30-bed jail with holding capacity for both men and women, kitchen, inmate exercise room, an emergency power plant, judge and clerical staff offices, a courtroom with a metal detector, a law library, and even office space for visiting law enforcement personnel from other agencies.

"We're on schedule and in good shape, budget-wise," Adamson said. "We're quite happy with the contractors — they're doing a quality job in a timely manner."

Beckenhauer Construction of Norfolk is the construction manager for the building designed by architects Prochaska & Associates of Omaha.

There is a tight schedule for completion, with the dispatch center expected to be moved by the first week in January. The rest of the move is anticipated to be completed before the end of February.

Any prisoners held in the old jail at that time will be temporarily transferred to neighboring counties while the move takes place.

The current jail usually houses about 10 inmates per day, but lately that has increased to 15 to 20 per day, according to Adamson. The new facility will house more inmates in a more secure manner.

The jail contains both high-security and regular cells. The cells were pre-constructed and dropped into the building by crane. A state-of-the-art indoor exercise room will replace the current fenced, outdoor exercise area, which will increase security.

Face-to-face contacts between inmates and visitors will be replaced with a video visitation system that will also enhance security.

Because the new jail will have holding capacity for women inmates, Adamson said he anticipates it will be able to hold female prisoners for neighboring counties whose jails are not designed to hold both men and women concurrently.



Sandy Benson/Correspondent

CHERRY COUNTY'S Justice Center in Valentine is being constructed next to the veterans' memorial, which was retained and improved as part of the new addition.

The new facility will be adding several jobs to the local economy, as well, by more than doubling the staff to 10 full-time and several part-time positions. Currently there are five full-time employees and no part-time staff.

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