

County plans tours of justice center

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By Betsy Friedrich Hub Staff Writer | 0 comments

KEARNEY — The public will have plenty of chances to see the inside of the new Buffalo County jail in the next few weeks.

The Buffalo County Board of Supervisors and Sheriff Neil Miller discussed plans for several public tours and open houses at the jail between now and early March, when inmates will be moved into the new facility.

The public events will kick off with a ribbon cutting and open house Feb. 17 starting at 10:30 a.m. There will be tours of the jail immediately following the ribbon cutting and more tours from 1-5 p.m. that afternoon.

There jail will also be open to the public for tours from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Feb. 20 and from 1-5 p.m. Feb. 21.

"We have reached a milestone in the construction project," Board Chairman Dick Pierce said. "We are extremely appreciative of the citizens of the Buffalo County, and we want to again thank everyone who has supported the Buffalo County Justice Center Project."

Anyone interested in a tour is asked to enter on the east side of the jail on Central Avenue.

Construction on the new jail just south of the current Buffalo County Courthouse began in August 2008. The project is funded by a \$24.5 million bond issue that voters approved in April 2008.

When the transition to the new jail is complete, the current jail will be demolished to make room for a new courts complex that will include five courtrooms and office space for judges and clerks.

Together, the jail and court space will be known as the Buffalo County Justice Center.

The facility was designed by Goldberg, Sullivan & McCreery of St. Joseph, Mo., and built by Beckenhauer Construction Inc. of Norfolk.

Miller said subcontractors and construction crews will be on the site until Friday finishing last-minute details.

In addition to the public events, the county is planning several open houses and tour opportunities for invited guests, who are asked to RSVP to board secretary Lynn Rauner at 236-1225.

Invitations are being sent to service clubs around the county for tours Feb. 20-26.

The county will play host to University of Nebraska at Kearney criminal justice students from 1 p.m. to 1 a.m. Feb. 26. Miller said the students will be booked into the jail as if they were prisoners, fed a meal and visited by guests so corrections officers can train in the new facility.

On Feb. 28, there will be an evening open house so law enforcement officers and their families to tour the jail.

City of Kearney and Buffalo County employees will tour the facility March 1-3, and there will be an open house and tours for corrections officers March 4.

Miller said on days when the public is not touring the jail, corrections officers will be training and preparing for inmates.

In other business Tuesday the board:

- n Approved the 2010 one- and six-year road and bridge plan

- n Approved a letter asking a farmer south of Gibbon to remove 40 feet of a berm that blocks water drainage in the area.

n Settled a tax appeal with Monsanto that sets the plant's 2009 real property at \$11.2 million and personal property at \$22.7 million. That's a change from the county's original assessment of \$29.5 million for real property and \$1.3 million for personal property.