

Voices

— THE WEEKEND NEWSPAPER

SUNDAY

Vol. 10, No. 1
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Seventy-Five Cents
Telephone (202) 263-2116

WWW.VOICESNEWS.COM

Periodical Postage Paid 06701-9009
USPS 545690 ISSN 0193-1474

January 7

Board Members Tour Middle School

by Susan Faber

WOODBURY-BETHLEHEM

— With completion of a \$6 million building project about a month away, Woodbury Middle School Principal Linda Demikat beamed with anticipation during a tour of the renovated school following the January 2 Region 14 Board of Education meeting.

"We're very excited," Ms. Demikat said as she expressed "guarded optimism" that the second floor of the new wing would be in use by the end of January. An elevator to the second floor has yet to receive

approval by state inspectors.

Board members toured the first floor which includes new "state of the art" science labs complete with television access to science cable stations and overhead lighting automatically timed to dim when the rooms are not in use. The labs will be open Monday, January 8.

Nearby is a new library media center which school officials say is five times larger than the existing library. The second floor contains 10 large

eighth-grade classrooms and the central computer lab.

"Classroom management is much easier when you have the space," said school board member John Howard who serves as head of the Middle School Building Committee and led the tour.

New plum-colored lockers line the corridor that sports a bright green and plum carpet.

"It's lively," said the project's architect and construction manager Greg Grew of the

Woodbury firm, Grew Design Inc.

During construction, eighth graders have been using classrooms in the existing wing while seventh graders were moved into the original eighth-grade wing.

"We wanted to start the year with as many children in place as possible," said Ms. Demikat, who praised both teachers and the school's 501 students for adjusting to the transition period. (Please turn to page 4)

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ed.

Students have displayed "a sense of pride," Mr. Howard said, in their new surroundings, and "the crown and glory is the main corridor," he said.

High school students' artwork may be displayed on the walls and it is hoped that plants from the high school agri-sciences building will add decor.

A new suite of administrative offices near the main entrance will be more visible and will offer more security, since those entering or leaving the building can be monitored.

The new wing also includes a basement storage area, sloped roofs and a portico outside the school entrance. Separate traffic circles have been built for school buses and parents' vehicles.

Dropping off children will be "effortless," Mr. Howard said, and the new design will help reduce traffic congestion.

The new brick facade has been constructed in a traditional style to bridge the gap between the original 1960s building and the new wing, the architect said. Officials stressed the intention of blending the architecture both inside and out.

"We don't want people to pull in the driveway and say 'there's the addition,'" Mr. Howard said. "When you pull in and see the front area, it's very impressive."

New landscaping has been added, an emergency road has been built and there are new parking spaces on both sides of the building.

Playing fields have benefited also, since dirt from the construction site has been spread on them and seeded. Local residents donated the use of farm equipment for work on the

tive effort," Mr. Howard commented.

Renovations on the existing building included expanding the cafeteria where new windows, overhead lights and a new floor have been installed.

The changes aim "to lower the noise level and brighten the place up," Mr. Howard said. "It's worked well. The kids are having a more relaxed approach to lunch."

The art room has been renovated and the original science labs have been converted into classrooms.

The entire building is "far safer," Mr. Howard said, and has been brought up to code. The fire alarm system has been overhauled and fire department members have familiarized themselves with the new layout.

New faculty and student bathrooms have been made handicapped-accessible, doors have been upgraded and drinking fountains have been placed at different heights to accommodate people of varying heights.

The \$6 million renovation has taken a year-and-a-half to complete and is part of an overall \$14 million project involving improvements at Nonnewaug High School and Mitchell Elementary School.

The project cost is eligible for a 45 percent state reimbursement, said Superintendent of Schools Frank Sippy.

An open house at Woodbury Middle School is scheduled for Tuesday, February 8, with a ribbon cutting at 4 p.m. in the new library media center.

Volunteers are needed as soon as possible to help load books on carts and move them from the old library media center to the new one. Anyone interested in helping may call Ms. Demikat at 263-6206.



Region 14 Board of Education Chairman George Rehkamp (left) and board member John Howard discussed plans for the official opening of the new classroom wing at Woodbury Middle School during a tour of the new building on January 2. Plum-colored lockers near the eighth-grade classrooms have been designed for a "lively" look, according to the project's architect Greg Grew. Mr. Howard serves as chairman of the Middle School Building Committee. (Faber photos)



Region 14 Board of Education member John Howard (second from left) reviewed floor plans for the recently completed classroom wing at Woodbury Middle School during a tour he conducted for board members on January 2. The addition also includes new science labs, a central computer lab and a new library media center. Renovations to the existing building and outdoor entrance areas are also part of the \$6 million building project. Pictured with Mr. Howard are (from left) board members Barbara Perkinson, Jean Smith, George Rehkamp and David Newell.