



Siftings Herald / Jeremy Langley

A crew digs a trench in preparation for new buildings in the Gurdon School District.

Construction starts on new Gurdon school complex

By JEREMY LANGLEY
Gurdon Times

GURDON — It's a process that has taken more than eight years, but construction has begun on a new auditorium and administrative complex on the Gurdon High School campus.

The project began as an idea presented to Supt. Bobby Smithson by Charles and Anita Cabe shortly after the completion of the new Gurdon High School on U.S. 67 South. Smithson said the initial cost to build the facility at the time was just

\$700,000. "By the time we got through with our drawings, we had a \$3.5 million auditorium," he said.

The complex will feature a 1,200 seat auditorium and an administrative suite. The suite will house the office of the superintendent and other district-wide personnel.

An "alumni room" will be attached to the administrative suite. The room will serve as a banquet room and will be available to host community events. It will include a small kitchenette.

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A "hall of fame" will run from the auditorium's lobby, down the side of the auditorium to the alumni room, Smithson said. The hall will feature the school's class photos that date back several decades and other Gurdon memorabilia. Smithson said he would like to appoint a committee to decide what will be displayed in the hall.

The original plans had called for a band and choral facility to be built as part of the project, but there are not enough funds. Smithson said that if the district decides to build the band and choral rooms in the future, they should be built somewhere near the middle of the campus to reduce the length of the walk for the youngest band members coming from Cabe Middle School. Funding for the auditorium

project came from different sources, Smithson said. A special election in April allowed the district to borrow \$6 million to pay off \$4 million in debt. That left \$2 million for the auditorium fund. The school has also received more than \$500,000 from the state and a large amount in private donations.

Because of the private fundraising efforts of Charles and Anita Cabe, the Gurdon School Board has voted to name the auditorium for the couple.

The district has \$3.3 million on hand to begin construction. Bids for the project came in just \$19,000 over that amount, so the school board decided to supplement the construction cost from the district's surplus funds.

Two omissions from the plans have been discovered

since the bids on the project were accepted. Smithson said the district will have to pay an additional \$20,000 to purchase a pump that will increase the water pressure for the fire sprinkler system. A \$15,000 chair lift will also have to be purchased to make the second level control booth handicap accessible.

Smithson said the district will cover the extra costs from funds on hand. That, however, may make it difficult for the district to find local matching funds for other projects in the future.

The auditorium project has had a lot of attention because of the state's contention that 1,200 seats is too large for the Gurdon School District, Smithson said. He said the board decided to go with a 1,200 seat auditorium because

of large crowds that attend graduation.