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Sheriff's, EMA building nearing completion

County departments to move in by early December; 2012 budget review set for late October

By Ethan Andrews | Oct 18, 2011



James Leigh of Ferraiolo

Photo by: Ethan Andrews

Construction moves a temporary fence Monday, Oct. 17 in preparation for landscaping work in front of a new building that will house the county's Sheriff's Office and Emergency Management Agency.

BELFAST — A new, 10,750-square-foot building that will house the Waldo County Sheriff's Office and Emergency Management Agency is likely to be finished by late November or early December, according to officials involved with the project.



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Saco-based PM Construction began work in May on the L-shaped building, located behind the former Waldo County Jail (now Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center).

The larger wing will serve as the new headquarters of the Sheriff's Office, currently located in a nearly 200-year-old residential building on Congress Street. A smaller wing will serve as a home base for the Waldo County EMA, which is currently located in the basement of the old jail.

The project was spurred by a nearly \$250,000 Federal Emergency Management Agency grant to Waldo County EMA in 2009. The department planned to use the money for a stand-alone building, but the county commissioners had been looking into building a new Sheriff's office and officials collectively agreed to combine the projects in order to save money on basic infrastructure.

According to County Commissioner William Shorey, the final bill for the new Sheriff's and EMA building and related improvements, like landscaping and repaving, will be around \$1.89 million.

The original estimate of \$1.72 million included a number of additions to the \$1.45 million base cost of the project, like bullet-proof glass in the lobby of the Sheriff's office, footings for a future radio tower, furniture, a generator and other items, but Shorey said there were some unanticipated expenses around redistributing utilities between the old and new buildings.

To pay for the new building, the county tapped into several reserve accounts to the tune of \$1.16 million, a capitol reserve fund for the jail (\$137,200), and benefitted from \$422,700 in federal grants from FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security.

In the planning stages, the commissioners touted the fact that the new Sheriff's and EMA headquarters could be built without a bond, other financing or a tax hike.

Some opponents of the project claimed the building would leave nothing in the county's coffers, but Shorey said on Monday, Oct. 17, that the plan was to keep \$500,000 in unappropriated reserves — tax revenue that comes in during the year and supports operating costs — and he believed the final tally would come out "very, very close to that goal."

In other business, the county commissioners have nearly completed a draft 2012 budget to present to the county's budget review committee. In a break from past years, the committee plans to review the entire budget in one, day-long session, Saturday, Oct. 29.

As of Oct. 17, figures had not been finalized and Shorey asked to withhold comment on the draft budget until it was finished and had been presented to committee members. He anticipated this would be sometime around Oct. 21.

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