

thrown from the homemade boat in which he was riding.

Sanford: Oakman School won't be ready until February

By **ED HOWELL**
Eagle News Editor

The construction company over the Oakman High School construction project have until Dec. 28 to show considerable progress toward correcting masonry problems, or the Walker County School System can cancel its contract, Superintendent of Education Harvey Sanford revealed Monday.



*Harvey
Sanford*

"We don't want to do that," Sanford said, adding he hoped by then to hear a new firm date as to when Eighteen Oaks, the contractor in charge of the project, expects students, teachers and administrators can move into the school.

Sanford said Eighteen Oaks seemed to be apologetic and responding to reported problems, adding that a let-

See **OAKMAN, A12** ►



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Oakman

From A1

ter sent by the county school system in early December intended to put a deadline of sorts on the matter.

He said it now appears that the new Oakman School will not be ready in time for the start of the second semester, as he hoped a month ago.

"We could be in it by the first of February," Sanford said.

However, Sanford said the move would not be much of a problem, as the new facility will use new furniture, such as student and teacher desks and lockers.

Files, personal materials and supplies could easily be moved, he said.

Sanford said a subcontractor has been responsible for most of the problems with the masonry work at the Oakman site.

The biggest problem involved brick and block work that was not acceptable, and had to be torn up and relaid, Sanford said.

The original contract had called for the school to be completed by July or August. Eighteen Oaks has assessed the rent for the classroom trailers since Nov. 1, and will be until the new building is open.

Sanford said the masonry work is now being corrected at the contractor's expense, adding he has been pleased with the other subcontractor work on the project.

"They have assured us they will move at all deliberate speed," Sanford said. "They've been very apologetic. I feel confident we're back on track with them."

Sanford said that while the letter puts out an official timeline to get problems worked out, he said he is still more concerned about getting the quality of work done right as opposed to an actual deadline.

In April 2004, the Walker County Board of Education authorized a bond issue for work at a number of schools, including Oakman, as well as the retirement of some previous bond issues.

The board accepted the low bid submitted by Morgan Keegan & Co. Inc. for

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- Walker County superintendent Harvey Sanford

almost \$13.9 million at a net annual interest rate of 4.25 percent.

Sanford said at the time, the plans included spending an estimated \$4.5 million at Oakman High for the replacement of the original portions of the school building.

In 2004, the board approved setting up portable classrooms for classes starting that fall, as well as demolishing the main building of the school for new construction.

The school, a 1935 Works Progress Administration building, was torn down in July 2004.

The new construction is taking place adjacent to the south side of the gymnasium building, which remained. Next to the new construction is a 1987 addition, which remained, and a pattern of mobile units connected by sidewalks.

Sanford noted earlier this year there were water problems under the old school at one time, the wiring was too old and antiquated for the computer age and other floor problems could be seen in the area of the auditorium.

Principal Joel Hagood said at the time that the teachers were running out of space and having to share classrooms.

He said that the temporary modular classrooms actually offered more space than the old building.

Last school year, the school grew to as much as 400 in enrollment because of transients, Hagood said.

Sumiton Wal-Mart looking for toys, clothes and other presents they might not otherwise have without the program.

The money isn't blindly distributed, however, Burnett said the Sumiton Police Department does a minor background check to make sure the children either live or go to school in the area. Both men said they would like to expand the program's reach but it would require donations from business-

On Saturday stood in front of the Wal-Mart

Commission

AlaTax sends the forms to dealers, who remit payment back to AlaTax. Yonce said the company already deals with a number of companies because of other contracts, and usually the company and distributors have no problem calling each other on the phone with a question or problem, he said.

Deposits are made electronically to cut down on paperwork, he said, adding that the deposits can be divided up into however many accounts the county desires. One county divides its sales tax revenue into 13 accounts, he said.

This frees up the commission to handle other work by giving the work to an experienced company, he said.

"This is something for a fair amount of money that you can outsource," he said. "This is one less thing that can bog down administratively."

AlaTax, which already does business with the county to collect other revenues, will charge 1.85 percent of the fuel tax revenue collected.

Yonce also indicated the company can help with compliance issues, as it makes 5,000 to 10,000 calls a month just on taxpayer compliance. Traditionally, compliance improves once the company

takes over collection, said, adding the county could also help with

Walker County Commission Chairman Erick said he prefers a one-year contract for the revenue, which was a good idea. The company can handle for up to three years, the company could Jan. 1.

"It would probably be in February. You have taxpayers 30 days," said.

In another matter, the commission agreed to give Erick the authority to regulate voter machine approved bid lists, the state final process for approving voting machines is enabled. Commission plan to buy off of the state of County Commission of Alabama (ACC) said they were working on a tight Feb. 1 deadline.

The regulation of voter machines is guaranteed to be reimbursed by the state, in part because the state of County is not in compliance now with precincts. However, Probate Judge Allison said Secretary Nancy Worley is

Jasper

used to easily lure a potential business from moving in, an operation that could be enormously expensive.

Nolen said it cost \$10,000 per acre to level the grounds for the current industrial park, and added, "This would be significantly more to level."

He said the land will be prepared only in case of a specific use, meaning heavy interest from a potential industry.

The council's action came following the announcement of Fontaine Trailer Company's commitment to Jasper in November, and more recently that of Central States Manufacturing this month.

"Yes, we've been successful this year," Nolen said, adding with a laugh, "We need some more."

The structure is available and could be used for

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