

High praise at high school

Renovation work completed in time for the new school year

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Despite running into unexpected entanglements through the summer that required substantial additional work, contractors have substantially completed the \$2.6 million job at the high school, allowing the building to open doors to its students Wednesday morning.

The work originally entailed putting new heating and ventilation units in all the A-building classrooms and adding air conditioning to the administration offices, but was expanded to fix existing problems with the fire alarm system and the wiring when problems were discovered.

Initially, work was slated to continue, after school hours, into October and November. But according to Permanent Public Building Committee

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PPBC Project Manager
Steve Stewart

Project Manager Steve Stewart, the work was completed ahead of schedule due to the diligence of the contractors.

“The contractors were very profes-

sive and aggressive throughout the project,” said Stewart. “They were able to achieve a certain momentum early on and keep it going.”

Stewart specifically singled out E.A. Colangeli’s superintendent Bob Manic, as well as Hall Sheetmetal, Automatic Temperature Controls, J.C. Lentine Electric, and the high school custodial staff who have worked during the last three weekends to clean all areas of the A Building.

“I thought the contractors did a terrific job of accelerating the schedule and turning over the entire A building to us,” said Principal Paul Madden. “Under the initial plan, we were only going to get the wings back in September and they were going to keep the central part of the building, which would have created its own set of

Needham High School work done ahead of schedule

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problems.”

The time line of the project was seemingly in jeopardy early on when it was discovered that existing wiring in the ceilings of the A Building was a mess and had to be fixed. Furthermore, the alarm system was compromised, which triggered the need to upgrade the first and second floors of the A building from heat detectors to smoke detectors.

Despite the additional work and associated headaches, the main portion of the work was completed by the end of last week.

“It was a situation where the whole thing really could have gone south,” said Stewart. “Usually, you get a break-even sort of performance from contractors, nothing out of the ordinary. But these guys stepped up and continued to

work toward getting done by September.”

According to Stewart, the lone remaining work will be in the attic of the A building involving the ventilation exhaust system, which is expected to be done by mid-September, and work insulating the ventilation units on the C gym roof. Stewart said he expects the loose ends to be completely tied up by mid-October, still a full six weeks ahead of schedule.

Despite laws that require municipalities to hire the lowest responsible and qualified bidder, Stewart said he hopes he might see some of these contractors again on the final two phases of the HVAC project, which are heading into their planning stage and will be a hot topic this fall.

“If this was a private-sector job, it’s one of those deals where you’d slip them a

business card and say, “Hey, I’ve got all this other work coming up, I thought you guys did a great job, would you be interested in these projects?” said Stewart. “But with a public project and the public bidding laws, it gets a little more complicated.”

Stewart said he expects talks surrounding the scope and plan for the final two phases of HVAC work to heat up this fall.

Among those questions to be discussed and answered will be: How much the projects will cost as well as what to do about existing problems, such as the fire alarm and wiring problems encountered during this summer’s work, and whether to incorporate them into the scope of work or leave them as separate projects.

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