

104 Work begins on District 2 central office

By Nathan Jerke

Staff reporter

Sheridan County School District 2 hopes to move into its new central office building next October after ground was broken last week in the Whitney Benefits east side development.

The new central office, to be located on the corner of Connor Street and Grinnell Avenue, will be the first tenant in Whitney Benefits' development, and district administrators are hoping it will be the cornerstone of the district for years to come.

"We're a very stable business. We're not going anywhere. We're looking at this to be at least a 50-year structure, or even more," said Julie Carroll, district supervisor of buildings and grounds.

"We want it to fit in with what's down there, we feel like it will. It'll help it keep it vibrant down there," she added.

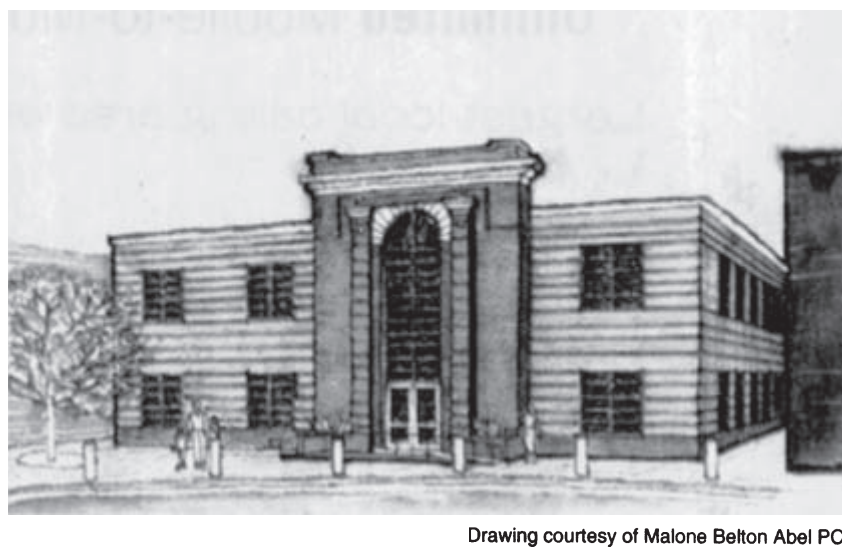
"This is a perfect fit for us," district Superintendent Craig Dougherty said. "We're excited about being right down where the action is and being part of the Sheridan business community."

When finished, the central office will contain about 17,000 square feet on two stories with about 4,000 square feet to be leased for professional office space.

The district board of trustees in November approved purchase of the property from Whitney Benefits for \$46,022. The board also approved the construction bid by JBD Inc. of Sheridan for \$2,322,276.

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Drawing courtesy of Malone Belton Abel PC

A conceptual drawing of the Sheridan County School District 2 central office building to be constructed on the corner of Grinnell Avenue and Connor Street in Whitney Benefits' east side planned unit development. The central office will be the first building in the residential and commercial development.

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Carroll said JBD began excavation before the current cold spell. She said the company already has an on-site office and fencing surrounding the area. She said excavation for the footing and foundation will commence when snow melts and the temperature increases.

Carroll said that, according to plans, the construction will be aboveground by February and should be completed by the end of October.

"That's obviously a pretty tight timeline, but if everything falls in line, our contractor is pretty hopeful that he can keep that schedule," Carroll said.

Carroll said the building, designed by Malone Belton Abel, is borrowing some design features

from the now leveled Central Middle School. She said the building will look appropriate near the historic downtown area.

"We thought it would be fitting since this is down close to where the old middle school was, plus it still fits with the downtown characteristics," Carroll said. "It's not too overwhelming, but it's what people are familiar with seeing down there."

She said the building will have a full boardroom and a large conference room that may be open for public use.

The central office has been in the planning stages since the state School Facilities Commission approved it in 2002. It was approved at the same time as the

ninth grade wing and vocational facility at Sheridan High School, the new junior high school, and demolition of the old junior high school.

School administration has been housed in an office building on Sugarland Drive since 2003.

"We wanted to make sure we had the projects for the schools under way before we started focusing on the central office," Dougherty said.

The commercial and residential development where the district office will be built was approved by the Sheridan City Council on Monday, and work on water and sewer lines has already begun.

The development is slated to provide about 95,000 square feet of office space, 45,000 square feet of retail, and 76 new residences.

Whitney Benefits President Tom Kinnison said the infrastructure for the development, including water, sewer and utilities, will be complete by next summer. He said Grinnell Square, at the corner of Grinnell and Connor in front of the central office building, will be finished sometime next fall.

No other buildings in the development have been announced.

"The fact the community of Sheridan has viewed downtown as an important entity for the vitality of the community — we thought we should be a part of that," Dougherty said.

"It's been a collaborative effort ... this could be a good partnership to have a positive for the school district and a positive for downtown," Carroll said.

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