

# Plans jelling for Rome CCA

• Officials with Rome City Schools are finalizing plans for a college and career academy at the high school.

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Holly Amerman

As the work on a new practice football field at Rome High wraps up, the plans for a college career academy on campus are being finalized and bids for a construction manager at-risk for the project are expected to be requested within the next several months, said Lou Byars, the superintendent of Rome City Schools.

The new multipurpose building, which will house athletics facilities and classrooms for about two-dozen career pathways, is expected to cost between \$14 million and \$16 million. An extension of the 1-cent education local options sales tax — voters approved this last fall — will be the main funding source for the project.

Since the current practice football field is on the site for the planned building, crews have been working since earlier this year to construct a new practice field — a full-size football field with bleachers — on a 4.5-acre tract on the school's property. Once the field is complete and ready to use, Byars said, work will begin on readying the site for construction on the multipurpose building.

"We've pretty much come a good ways on that," Byars said.

The need for the additional space the building would bring is being felt now, Byars said.

"The sooner the better," he said of getting it built.

An order for eight modular classroom trailers at Rome High was put in earlier this year. However, they are not expected to be delivered, due to the manufacturer being backed up on orders, until after the school year has begun, Byars said.

Byars and Principal Eric Holland are working on a contingency plan to put in place early in the school year without the additional classroom space. Preparations for the trailers are to be completed before their arrival to make set-up as quick as possible, Byars said, and noted the trailers will not have bathrooms so time-consuming plumbing installation will not be needed.

The final preparations for the design of the new building hinge on the determination of the number of pathways it will house — the more there are then the higher the cost, Byars said. Specifically, a decision has not been made on whether the building will have space for an automotive pathway, which carries greater expense than a regular classroom. The pathways offered will be a mix of those which meet community needs, such as those for medical fields, and ones with a strong student-interest, he continued.

When the number of pathways and what those will be has been set a firmer cost estimate will be in place, Byars said.

The portion of the building not for career pathways — to include a practice pad for the JROTC program, an indoor practice field for athletics and locker rooms for the football team — appears to have been overestimated in how much it will cost, Byars said.

A projected opening date has not been set since plans are not finished and a total cost not determined. Since the school system does not plan on borrowing any money for the project, it will be reliant on completing the project as ELOST collections come in — the extended collection period does not start until April 1, 2019.

Also, in mid-May the Rome Board of Education approved moving former STEM and gifted programs coordinator Holly Amerman to the position of CEO of the CCA. Aside from construction, the system also has to finalize the staffing of the CCA for its pathways.