High hopes for Hancock training facility

Complex set for fall 2013 completion

Construction continued Wednesday on the administration building, which will house classrooms, at the $28.8 million Public Safety Complex at Hancock College’s Lompoc campus. The facility will be a training site for local, regional, and possibly statewide public safety officials.

July 20, 2012 12:45 am - By John Salata / Staff writerjsalata@lompocrecord.com

Now that construction crews at Hancock College’s Lompoc campus have installed plumbing and electrical lines, workers can begin construction of the impressive, state-of-the-art $26.8 million Public Safety Complex, due for completion in fall 2013.

The complex will be a training site for local, regional, and possibly statewide public safety officials, which would include police officers, firefighters, and emergency response personnel. The site would be decked with facilities that would enable certification and recertification in certain cases for professionals.

Up until last September, the future site of Hancock’s training complex was nothing more than trees, shrubs, and forest.

There were no electrical lines or plumbing that would have allowed a building to be constructed on that section of Lompoc’s northern border.

Over the last 10 months, the 52.5 acres site has been transformed with the outline of the sprawling site, which will be funded by a portion of the $180 million in Bond Measure I funds. The bond funds are for supporting major technology and facilities advancement for the community college district.

Project Manager Abel Gomez, of Kittel Construction/Construction Management, said that in the coming months the public will begin to see the exterior of buildings, including a 36,678 square-foot administration/classroom building, 100-yard shooting range, and an impossible-to-ignore six-story fire tower stretched across the skyline.

“There was absolutely nothing out this way,” Gomez said. “It was pure shrub and brush. This is brand new from the ground up.”
The project is well on its way. Gomez said. There were some anticipated delays because of anthropological artifacts found in the area. Construction workers discovered Chumash artifacts that included rocks shaped as a spearhead, rock clusters that could have used to start a fire, and other artifacts, which temporarily stopped construction at five sites.

A Native American monitor was brought in, Gomez said.

“We cooperated and made sure to take the proper procedure with their rights on the findings,” Gomez said.

Besides those stops in construction, there has been a flurry of activity in the area — that is being done under the original budget projection. The project was expected to cost $37.9 million, but Felix Hernandez, vice president of facilities at Hancock, said that the general contractor, Sinanian Development Inc., provided a bid significantly below what had been anticipated.

The $7 million that would have otherwise gone to the project would guarantee the creation of a $16.7 million Industrial Technology Complex, Hernandez said.

During a presentation to the Lompoc City Council on Tuesday, Hancock Fire Academy coordinator Andy Densmore said that the Public Safety Complex is no longer a “pie-in-the-sky” dream.

“It’s huge, not just for the community and surrounding area but also the Cailifornia area,” Densmore said.

Gomez said five principal buildings will make up the facility, each of which are being constructed at the same time. The buildings include the administration/classroom building, vehicle apparatus and storage building, six-story fire tower, burn prop building, and open-roof shooting range.

Construction workers have already finished the block wall and the footing on the wall for the administration/classroom building. The site is expected to be able to accommodate 300 individuals.

The fire prop building has a completed exterior, along with window and door framing, and a fire proof lining on the exterior.

Once completed, the building would be capable of creating contained fires inside, including from the roof, but would include an extensive ventilation system. Firefighters would be able to practice forcible entry through doors.

The vehicle apparatus and storage building located on the north side of the site has a concrete floor, metal roof covering, and metallic frame in place.

An 1.3-mile emergency vehicle operator course track on the west end of the site is ready to have asphalt and base material applied.

Once completed, the track would allow public safety personnel to drive 110 miles per hour on the closed-loop track.

There is also a 1,000-yard slow speed skid pan that has been completed, which would allow public safety personnel to practice driving on slippery surfaces.

“The biggest development (in the coming months) is that the building structures are going up,” Hernandez said. “You can visually see the building are going up. The footing and foundation are in.”