



Date picked to celebrate renovated Erie Veterans Memorial Stadium

By Ed Palattella

Posted at 2:00 AM

Royals football team will play only home game and honor stadium, seniors on night of Oct. 12, which is also homecoming.

Due to construction, the Erie High Royals football team is scheduled to play only one regular-season game at its home field of Erie Veterans Memorial Stadium.

But it will be a big one.

At the Oct. 12 game against St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, of Buffalo, the Royals will celebrate homecoming and senior night; recognize the stadium renovations, including new artificial turf; and rededicate the 10,000-seat stadium, which opened in 1924 at 26th and State streets as a memorial to soldiers and sailors who fought in World War I.

"We are going to make an event of it," the Erie School District's executive director of operations, Neal Brokman, said of the Oct. 12 game, which is scheduled to start at 7 p.m.

Erie schools Superintendent Brian Polito, at a meeting on Monday, told the School Board of the plans for the reopening of Veterans Stadium, where repairs are part of the \$80.8 million building reconstruction project that the Erie School District launched this summer.

Polito and Brokman, who is overseeing the building project, also said the turf installation at the stadium is on course to be finished as scheduled, on Sept. 13. The turf was to be delivered on Aug. 15, but the new delivery date is Friday because of delays in manufacturing the playing surface, Brokman said.

He said contractors will work over the Labor Day weekend and the next two weeks to get the turf installed by Sept. 13, which is the date stipulated in the installation contract for the \$434,000 turf. NET Sports Group, of Saco, Maine, won the contract for the new turf, which will feature Royals logos and a veterans-related logo identical to the design that was at the center of the old, 12-year-old turf.

The stadium project is budgeted at \$2.6 million, including repairs to the concrete and press box as well the painting of the walls. Brokman said unforeseen electrical issues delayed the overall project, but that Sept. 13 remains the target date for the turf installation.

The stadium construction forced the Royals to schedule their first three home games, on Aug. 30, Sept. 6 and Sept. 13, at Gannon University. The schedule then left the football team with only one other home game — the Oct. 12 contest at the stadium. The football team is scheduled to play McDowell High School at the stadium for the District 10 championship on Oct. 25.

Other Erie High sports, such as boys and girls soccer, arranged to play their games on the road before the installation of the turf. And Mercyhurst Preparatory School, which rents Veterans Stadium for its home games, is playing its games at Mercyhurst University or on the road until after the installation of the turf.

Brokman said the district will wait a week after the turf installation to allow soccer and other sports to play games on the turf. He said the district will use the week to address any complications connected to the new turf.

“We are hoping to have it ready by the 20th,” Brokman said.

Other construction

The Erie School District is on its way to finishing most of its other construction projects by the first day of school, on Tuesday, Brokman said. Those projects include new roofs at Harding Elementary School and Wilson Middle School and the filling of obsolete coal bunkers at Wilson and Jefferson and Lincoln elementary schools.

In the fall, Brokman said, contractors will put a new roof on the district's service center, at West 16th and Raspberry streets, and install swipe-card security systems at the 11,000-student district's 16 school buildings. In the spring, work will start on the infrastructure of Northwest Pennsylvania Collegiate Academy, and renovations at Erie High are set to start after July 1, Brokman said.

He said the district is pushing the Erie High work into the 2020-21 fiscal year, which starts July 1, to increase the possibility of getting reimbursed for a portion of the work through the state's PlanCon program, which state lawmakers are considering streamlining and updating.

Brokman said the Erie High work is to focus on the renovation of about 45 classrooms, including heating and cooling systems, in the northern section of the 500,000-square-foot Erie High, which was built in the 1950s.

Brokman said work on the Erie High gym will be scheduled after the classroom renovations if money is available. The school district is financing the construction work using cash and bond revenue. The classroom work and related repairs at Erie High are projected to cost \$23 million, Brokman said.

"We want to make sure we address the problem areas that students attend most, which are the classrooms," Brokman said.

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HIDE CAPTION

Crews from McCreary Roofing, of Erie, hope to be done by Friday with roof work at Wilson Middle School, at East 28th and Reed streets. [CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE/ERIE TIMES-NEWS]



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Erie Veterans Memorial Stadium, at 26th and State streets in Erie, is shown on Tuesday. Work on the new turf field there could begin as early as Friday, according to crews involved with the project. The renovations to the stadium, which opened in 1924, are part of an \$80.8 million facilities plan for the Erie School District, with projects at all 16 school buildings and other facilities in the Erie School District. [CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE/ERIE TIMES-NEWS]



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HIDE CAPTION

Lincoln Elementary School, shown here Tuesday, has received a newly-paved parking lot in addition to other upgrades as part of an \$80.8 million facilities plan for the Erie School District. The school is on East 31st Street between Perry and Wayne streets. [CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE/ERIE TIMES-NEWS]