



**For Immediate Release**

**September 3, 2025**

## **Smith County Courthouse**

### **Construction Update**

Despite having 113 “weather days” so far during the yearlong construction of the courthouse, the project is still on time.

Bradley Barr, senior superintendent of Hoar Construction, gave a progress report to the Smith County Commissioners Court on Tuesday, September 2. He said the crews work overtime and/or bring in more staff to make up for rain delays.

They completed pouring concrete for the project a week early because of overtime and hard work, which, Barr said, was a huge milestone. The seven-story courthouse, which also has a basement and underground parking for judges, took 18,000 cubic yards of concrete and 17 tons of rebar – that’s equivalent to 18,000 concrete trucks and 680 pickup trucks of rebar.

There is now an average of 220 workers on site every day.

They are working to build out levels one through four with interior and exterior walls, mechanical, plumbing and electrical work and fire suppression systems.

They have been working on the underground tunnel system, which leads from the jail to the new courthouse. Having lots of rain is a challenge, he said, adding that the last heavy rain left 4 feet of water in the excavation of the tunnel.

At the very beginning of the project, pipes were installed underground as a permanent de-watering system to pump out underground spring-fed water and tie it into the stormwater system.

Barr said since the start of the project and through June 2025, they have seen 66 inches of rain, which is 23 inches above average.

Barr said they bring in more employees and have others work overtime to make up “weather days.”

“We can’t control the weather, but we can control how we respond to it,” he said. “We keep a positive attitude and do whatever it takes.”

Barr said they are still looking at the fall of 2026 completion on the project.

Judge Neal Franklin applauded the Hoar Construction and Fitzpatrick Architect teams and said their positive attitude and project management has had a huge impact on the project.

Barr said they will soon be starting on the structural steel portion of the courthouse, which will include the roof, mechanical work on the top level and the dome on top of the building, which he said they were targeting 12 weeks for. To save time and for safety measures, the dome will be prefabricated offsite and brought to the site in two pieces, flown in to place and fastened.

Barr said as soon as they can get the building’s exterior walls and windows in place to get them “in the dry,” the better because rain won’t be such a factor. He said they are putting a five-week timeline per floor, from framing to installing windows, which is a very aggressive schedule.

They are using a “smart build” practice, fabricating the exterior walls on the interior floor, which is safer and more efficient than doing it from the exterior.

Every inch of the courthouse is built in a 3-D model to make sure it works before they build it, he said, adding that an example is the plethora of ductwork that must fit together perfectly to work.

Brandy Ziegler, partner with Fitzpatrick Architects, talked about some of the design elements and construction materials being used for the project.

She said rusticated stone, which is rougher, larger stone, will be going around the bottom exterior of the building. GFRC, which is glass fiber reinforced concrete, will also be used on the exterior since it does not soak up as much water and will stay cleaner. The turquoise walls that can be seen on the project right now are a water-proofing barrier going up before the exterior materials are installed.

Water testing will be done on the building envelope during construction to ensure water tightness, she said.

The dome will be made from a copper-looking roof material but will not be actual copper so maintaining it will be much easier, Ms. Ziegler said.

She also brought up a plan to finish out an extra court on the fifth floor instead of leaving it as shell space, as planned. The roughly \$7 million it will take to construct the courtroom and associated support and public spaces, which could be used by visiting judges, can be paid for by interest earned from the courthouse and parking garage bonds. Since they already have the materials and subcontractors on the project, doing it now will be much cheaper than waiting, she said.

The Commissioners Court voted to finish out one of the courts on the fifth floor, as well as the public spaces, restrooms and in-custody secure spaces, for no extra cost to the taxpayers.

“To me, it’s looking at the future dollar,” Commissioner J Scott Herod said. “It will be very beneficial to have a space for visiting judges. And I see some value in doing it now to not put a burden on future taxpayers.”

Ms. Ziegler said they are hitting all their projected guaranteed max prices right on target to stay on budget.

Adding the fifth floor could push back the completion date, but it would only be to December 2026 instead of fall 2026, she said.

She projected that by next July, they will start “setting up” the building by installing IT and staging furniture move-in and set up.

The completion of phase 3, the demo of the current courthouse and construction of green space, is expected in spring of 2027.

Drone footage of the construction project taken on August 15, 2025, can be found here: <https://youtu.be/FV8utxzaYr4>