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Senior living complex may be open by year's end

By *editor*

Created 07/19/2011 - 00:15

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This portion of the former Grube Hospital that was constructed in 1908 was demolished by the Mistick Construction Company of Pittsburgh Monday to make way for the completion of Grace Place, a 24-unit housing complex for moderate-income seniors. (Photo by Larry McGuire/The Punxsutawney Spirit)

PUNXSUTAWNEY — Both construction and demolition continue to move along at a fast pace at the corner of Pine and North Gilpin streets at what is to be known as Grace Place, a senior living facility.

Demolition began Monday on a portion of the former Grube Hospital building. The portion of the building that is adjacent to Pine Street is being razed to make room for Grace Place, a 24-unit housing complex for moderate-income seniors.

The \$6.5 million project is being constructed by the Jefferson Area Lutheran Social Ministry and Trek Development.

Tim Spence, interim executive director for the Lutheran Social Ministry, said the single-story portion of the old hospital building, which recently housed the Pine Street Senior Center, is being demolished so the last portion of the apartment complex may be completed.

The senior center has been moved to the basement of the remaining hospital building, and has as much, if not more, space than the center had in the old senior center.

Monday, following the removal of the asbestos in the building over the weekend, demolition began on what was the hospital ward portion of the building.

Spence said the project is moving along at a fast pace, despite delays from the wet spring and early summer weather.

April 13, the former Parente's Recreation and a vacant home were torn down at the site so

the apartment project could begin, he said.
The complex will be heated by geo-thermal energy.

"We drilled 18 water wells for the heating and cooling system in the old parking lot," Spence said. "There's a rumor that we were drilling a Marcellus Shale gas well, which is not true."

Once the rain stopped and construction crews were able to get the cement footers poured, construction has moved on rather quickly, Spence said, adding that the contractor, Mistick Construction of Pittsburgh, specializes in quality fast-track construction.

Within the next three weeks, the apartment building and roof will be constructed, he said.

Spence said that one of things the ministry is attempting to do is have generations come together at Grace Place.

He's hoping that generations can join together and plant a garden between the Grace Place apartment building and the senior center building.

"I'm hoping the seniors will work together with the kids from Head Start, which will have a brand-new space on the first floor, to take care of the garden, and then the vegetables could go to the people who live in the apartments and supplement the meals at the senior center," Spence said.

The design of the apartment building is influenced by neighborhood architecture, including the former YMCA, the Fairman Center and Duane and Nancy Miller's home (the former Winslow house), he said.

Spence said eventually, the Lutheran Ministry would like to rebuild the porch that is on the remaining building where Jamie Stello's office is located in the original J.B. Eberhart house that was purchased for the Grube Hospital.

"It's not in the budget for this project, but we'd be thrilled to restore that piece so it ties the porches together throughout the neighborhood.

Spence said he hopes the apartment complex will be open and ready for tenants by the end of the year.

Whenever tenants move in, they can remember the rich history of the site of their new homes.

The Punxsutawney Hospital (also called the Grube Hospital) was founded in 1900 by Dr. John E. Grube.

It was first located in the Dinsmore Building on West Mahoning Street. After four or five years, the state Board of Health ordered the evacuation of that site.

Dr. Grube then purchased the Eberhart home at 103 Gilpin St., and the new hospital was completed in 1908.

The hospital closed in 1932, when it merged with the Adrian Hospital.

The wing that faces Pine Street was used as the unemployment office at one time; most recently it was the Pine Street Senior Center run by the Jefferson County Area Agency on Aging.

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Punxsutawney, PA

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