

Greece performing arts center to reopen

MEAGHAN M. MCDERMOTT

@MEAGMC

After more than nine months of renovations, the Greece Central School District's problemplagued performing arts center at Athena High School officially reopened Thursday.

And the theater is being rededicated with a new name: Greece Central Performing Arts Center.

Built as part of a \$119.5 million capital project in the early 2000s, the performing arts center was troubled from the start. It had obstructed views and numerous seats in the 1,600-seat auditorium had been installed so close together it was impossible to sit in them. Those issues and others later discovered throughout the entire project sparked a litany of lawsuits, and the fixes done over the past year were completed using funds from a \$5.2 million settlement agreement reached in September of 2013 with architectural firm and construction managers Tetra Tech Architects and Engineers.

"Greece taxpayers deserve to get what they paid for," said Superintendent Kathleen Graupman in an email statement. "This settlement made it possible for us to ensure that the performing arts center is the community asset that the district always intended."

Fixes made to the structure include: vaulting the balcony to improve sightlines, repositioning seats to improve leg room, new ramps and railings that are Americans with Disabilities Act compliant, adding stair access to the stage and making lighting and cosmetic improvements.

The rededication ceremony will include an overview of the work that was done and performances by students including Athena vocalist Mark Mitrano; Greece Olympia's a capella group Juke Vox, the Pine Brook 4th and 5th grade chorus; and the Arcadia High School Symphonic Orchestra.

The performing arts center is located at 750 Long Pond Road. Settlement funds were also used to make repairs to 13 school buildings botched in the early 2000s capital project. Problems with the overall project included: heating and security systems that didn't work right; drainage systems that were never hooked up; entry canopies at four schools that improperly shed ice during the winter, presenting a danger to students and staff; a loading dock built in an area inaccessible to trucks; a brick wall built across a light fixture, making it impossible to change the bulbs; and one school's flagpole installed atop a platform so high it required two custodians and a ladder to raise the flag. In 2008, portions of 13 schools had to be closed for emergency repairs after an engineering firm found that critical clips meant to secure the building walls to the roofs were never installed. Similar issues were found and fixed at what was then known as the Athena Performing Arts Center. The district filed its suit against Tetra Tech later that year.

MCDERMOTT @Gannett.com