

March 19, 2008 - It's Official: New Armory Coming

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It's official: New armory coming By Jon Stevens, Staff writer

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WAYNESBURG - U.S. Rep. John P. Murtha made it very clear Tuesday that with the National Guard bearing so much of the burden in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it's imperative that these soldiers have the equipment and training necessary for them to complete their mission safely.

Murtha made his comments at the 93-year-old Capt. Robert C. Wiley Armory in Waynesburg, which by all accounts has outlived its usefulness.

Because of that, Murtha and Maj. Gen. Jessica L. Wright, adjutant general of the Pennsylvania National Guard, officially acknowledged that a new Pennsylvania National Guard readiness center will be built on an 18-acre site at EverGreene Industrial Park in Franklin Township.

The present armory on North Washington Street, built in 1914, serves as home to Company C, 1-110th Infantry, consisting of soldiers split between existing armories in Waynesburg and Canonsburg.

Of the \$12.8 million cost for the new armory, \$9.2 million will come from the federal government and \$3.6 million from the state.

Addressing some of the guard members who attended the program, Murtha said, "I am inspired by your service."

He emphasized how important it is that soldiers have adequate training before being deployed. "And we have to make sure you have all the equipment necessary for that training right here at home," he said.

The Johnstown Democrat said it is important to look to the future because "you folks are the backbone of deployable soldiers in this country."

The new, state-of-the-art readiness center will be a one-story building with an assembly hall, administrative space, classrooms, locker rooms, a physical fitness room and kitchen space. A supporting facility will include a military equipment parking lot and a lot for private vehicles.

The building will be staffed by four full-time guardsmen and will serve as a training center for 140 soldiers one weekend a month. No live ammunition will be stored at the site.

Construction of the new building is expected to begin this fall and will take about one year to complete.

Once vacated, the existing Waynesburg and Canonsburg armories will be offered for sale at fair-market value.

Wright said the Wiley Armory has been the scene of tearful goodbyes but also joyful reunions.

"While the National Guard will be the stewards of the readiness center, it will belong to the community," she said.

Also speaking at the program was Mark McCurdy, representing state Rep. Bill DeWeese, D-Waynesburg, who referred to the Wiley Armory as a "living, breathing historic place."

Sharon Willison, standing in for state Sen. J. Barry Stout, D-Bentleyville, said, "It is the hope of all of us the new readiness center will be part of the local landscape."