

Amphitheater work to start

By Kevin Flowers

kevin.flowers@
timesnews.com

The new permanent roof at Highmark Amphitheater at Liberty Park is about to take shape.

Work crews from Erie's E.E. Austin & Son Inc., 1919 Reed St., are expected to start construction early next week, said Brenda Sandberg, the Port Authority's executive director. Some of the construction materials for the new roof arrived at the Liberty Park site this week.

"The foundation work

is already done, and the large wooden skeleton of the roof will start arriving soon," Sandberg said.

The Port Authority board of directors previously approved a \$557,000 construction bid from E.E. Austin to handle the construction of a permanent roof over the amphitheater. A storm on June 12, 2015, destroyed the fabric canopy that had covered the amphitheater stage for nearly 20 years.

The permanent roof will be a type of hard plastic called thermoplastic polyolefin. The structure will be

supported by glued-laminated wood beams. Sandberg has said the roof should be completed by early May.

Erie Architect Jeff Kidder has said the roof will save the Port Authority from storing and repairing a fabric canopy, and it will provide a long-term way to minimize maintenance costs. Kidder's firm, Kidder Wachter Architecture & Design, was hired by the Port Authority to design the permanent roof.

The Port Authority in September announced a two-year, \$60,000 naming-rights deal

with Highmark for the venue. As part of that deal, Highmark's name and logo will be affixed to the amphitheater.

Sandberg has said that revenue from any naming-rights agreement would be used to defray the cost of the roof project. The Port Authority is also using about \$70,000 in insurance proceeds, along with its own funds, to pay for the permanent stage covering.

Kevin Flowers can be reached at 870-1693 or by email. Follow him on Twitter at twitter.com/ETNflowers.