

LOCAL NEWS

Ohio releases nearly \$47M in funding for new Fairport Harbor school



Fairport Harbor School District's new pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade school will be built on green space and a parking lot that is adjacent to Harding Middle and High School — along New Fourth Street, near the intersection of Vine Street. The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission recently approved the release of \$46.9 million that will serve as the state's contribution toward constructing the new school. (News-Herald file photo)

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The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission recently approved the release of \$46.9 million that will serve as the state's contribution toward a major building project planned by [Fairport Harbor Schools](#).

That funding from the state will be coupled with about \$3.5 million from a 3.9-mill, \$5 million bond issue that Fairport Harbor School District [voters approved](#) in the November election.

The combination of state and bond issue revenue will provide about \$50.4 million to construct a new school which will serve the district's entire student body.

To view the financial contributions in another way, money from the bond issue will cover 7 percent of the project cost, while state dollars secured through the OFCC will pay for 93 percent of the endeavor.

The new pre-K through 12th-grade school will be built on green space and a parking area adjacent to the current Harding Middle and High School at [329 Vine St.](#)

Once the new school is completed, students from McKinley Elementary, located at 602 Plum St., would join the middle- and high-schoolers to be educated in the same building. The Harding and McKinley buildings, which are both more than 100 years old, then will be demolished.

When district leaders [launched a campaign](#) for the bond issue, they emphasized that approval of this ballot question was necessary to secure a much larger portion of funding from the state for building a new school.

After the bond issue passed, the question then became when Fairport Harbor Schools would receive the state funding and exactly how much would be allocated. District Superintendent Domenic Paolo said last October he anticipated that state funding for the project would become available to the district either in July 2022 or January 2023.

The [Ohio Facilities Construction Commission](#) approved a state share of \$46.9 for Fairport Harbor Schools on July 7. Action was taken at an OFCC meeting during which Fairport Harbor and four other districts received a total of \$307 million for school construction projects.

Fairport Harbor Schools leaders initially anticipated that the district would receive



While voters approved a \$5 million bond issue in November, the local share for state funding awarded by the OFCC on July 7 was listed at about \$3.5 million. Other revenue raised by the bond issue was earmarked to help construct a new public library as part of the new school for students, Paolo said.

“The state was only going to fund 3,500 to 4,000 square feet of library, and we knew that wouldn’t be enough,” Paolo said. “So we had to tack on an extra 2,000 square feet, and that was not matched by the state.”

Paolo said the additional 2,000 square feet of library area that’s above and beyond what OFCC was willing to pay for is considered a locally funded initiative within the school construction project.

In April, the School Board [selected ThenDesign Architecture](#) of Willoughby to design the new school.

“I know that in speaking to the architectural firm, this coming year is going to be a lot of design, a lot of collaboration, a lot of meetings, a lot of seeing what the state expectations are,” Fairport Harbor School Board President Tom Fazekas said.

The school board, at its most recent meeting, also approved surveying work to be done on the new school property, and soil samples to be taken from the land and tested.

Fazekas said he anticipates that actual construction of the new building will begin in 2023.

“Now that these state funds have been committed and we have a solid timeline for that, we might shave a little time (off the start date for construction),” he said. “We might have gone from a fall 2023 groundbreaking to a spring 2023 groundbreaking.”

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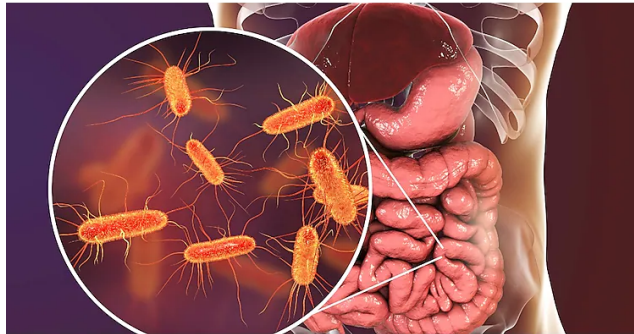


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