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Liccardo announces new funding for Coastside projects

Spending bill with earmarks for Coastside now heads to Senate

By Kathryn Wheeler
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The Pacifica School District has plans to build workforce housing to provide below-market rentals for district employees. Courtesy of Brookwood Advisors via Pacifica School District

On Thursday, the Pacifica School District received news of a potential boost in funding for its workforce housing development after the U.S. House of Representatives passed a spending bill that includes \$2 million for the project as one of Congressman Sam Liccardo's Community Project Funding requests.

Liccardo's office announced on Thursday that almost \$11 million in requests he made for projects in his district were part of the \$1.2 trillion of spending in a series of bills passed by the House. This comes on top of \$3.2 million for other projects that Liccardo announced earlier. The bills now await approval by the Senate and signatures from President Trump, with final passage needed by Jan. 30 to avoid a partial government shutdown.

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In a statement shared by Liccardo's office, Interim Pacifica School District Superintendent Carisa Bowman said, "In a region where housing costs are a significant barrier, this award allows us to move forward with a project that provides security for our staff and strengthens the entire Pacifica community." She added that the award constituted a "federal investment in our workforce housing" and in "the stability of our classrooms."

The funding for the workforce housing is one of four earmarks for the Coastside in this spending package. It follows the announcement of potential funding for the Montara Water and Sanitary District and Sewer Authority Mid-Coastside two weeks ago.

The spending bill also includes Liccardo's request for \$1.2 million for San Mateo County's Strengthening Coastal Resilience Project that addresses transportation safety and emergency preparedness along the San Mateo County coast. Adam Rak, chair of City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County, said that the funding would "help keep critical intersections operating and improve public safety during power outages, evacuations, and other emergency events."

Other funding includes \$850,000 for Half Moon Bay's Mirada Road Resiliency Project and \$250,000 for the second segment of Half Moon Bay's Eastside Parallel Trail.



Storms in 2024 damaged Mirada Road in Miramar. County crews converted the street to one-way and added barriers. New funding would provide additional repairs to the road and riprap.
Coastside News file photo

The award for the Pacifica School District takes a small chunk off of the total project cost, which is estimated to be roughly \$55 million. The most recent estimates mapped out that funding for the project will come from a combination of \$8 to \$10 million in certificates of participation—a form of loan from investors—and \$43.4 million from the \$70 million general obligation bond approved by voters in March of 2024.

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The project is intended to rent apartments to Pacifica School District employees at 70% of market rate, with options for one, two and three-bedroom apartments and townhomes. Rent for a one-bedroom apartment is expected to be roughly \$2,240 per month, while a three-bedroom townhome is projected to be around \$3,360.

Project costs have increased since it was first proposed in 2023. That led the district at its meeting on Wednesday to cut down on the number of units it will build in its first phase from 70 to 45. The move is a reversal of the board's decision last year to achieve an economy of scale by building all 70 units in one phase, which consultant Brookwood Advisors estimated would save the district \$142,000 per unit. Brookwood said on Wednesday that building all 70 units in phase one is now projected to far exceed the project's \$55 million budget.

The board also selected a contractor for the project, James E. Roberts-Obayashi Corp, which placed a bid for the construction of 45 units at roughly \$40 million. The selection came from bids submitted in a second round after the board chose to reject all of the bids submitted in September because they surpassed the project budget. The lowest bid (which public agencies are generally encouraged to select) was from a non-unionized company, Midstate Construction Corporation, which garnered pushback from union workers who urged the board to accept the bid from the Obayashi Corp.

The board also approved a project labor agreement that introduces certain working conditions including that all hired labor is part of a union. Construction is expected to be finished by summer 2027, according to the current project timeline.

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Liccardo celebrated the award in his press release on Thursday, saying "Local leaders pointed us toward our needs, and I'm proud we delivered." He touted the successful requests as an achievement that brings "local taxpayer dollars back home."

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Kathryn has reported for newspapers on both coasts, including The Red Hook Daily Catch, The Seattle Times, The Salish Current, and The Journal of the San Juan Islands. She has worked as a staff writer, freelancer, and photographer. She graduated from Wesleyan University, majoring in "Science in Society". She has also been a teacher and communications director.

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