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ALERT

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Work on Farrell schools to start this summer

By MELISSA KLARIC Herald Staff Writer Feb 7, 2018 Updated 1 hr ago



FARRELL – Plans are now underway for more than \$9.6 million in renovations in the Farrell School District.

School officials, who have been talking about the renovations for a year, say the upgrades are sorely needed.

“It’s hard to say it’s conducive to learning when there is no air conditioning,” Superintendent Lora Adams-King said. “It’s not a luxury in this day and age. It has become a safety issue.”

The high school building was erected in 1971 and there is no duct work for air conditioning. So, that will be one of the major overhauls contractors will tackle first.

HHSDR Architects and Engineers of Sharon, which conducted an in-depth study of Farrell’s campus, recorded temperatures upwards of 150 degrees on the school’s third floor.

“In 2016, some of our hottest days occurred after Labor Day,” Adams-King said.

Air conditioning is first on the priority list. Second are some environmental upgrades such as LED lighting – which will pay for itself in the long run, Business Manager Shane M. Wiesen said – and new flooring throughout the entire campus. The elementary building will get new lockers, which have not been upgraded in 50 years.

An upgrade the superintendent was most excited to discuss is the upcoming STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) lab.

Adams-King has already checked out schools that have STEM labs and plans on visiting more so that Farrell students have the most up-to-date technology at their fingertips.

Adams-King talked about 3D printers, maker-spaces and graphic design stations with stars in her eyes.

“Our students already have a swimming pool and the planetarium,” Adams-King said. “We want to continue giving our students those opportunities that they may not be able to get anywhere else. This is a global society. When they leave here, they have to compete with not only students in the country, but from around the world.”

The renovations will start in June, and contractors will work through the summer. Construction is scheduled to last about 18 months as workers will continue upgrades during the school year when the building is empty.

All call for bids is expected to go out in March. Bids will be opened in April, Wiesen said.

The district has borrowed the \$9.6 million, which it will pay back over 30 years.

School directors voted to create a “school construction fund” with the Pennsylvania Local Government Investment Trust (PLGIT), utilizing a certificate of deposit purchase program with the proceeds from the 2018 bond issue, Wiesen said.

“The renovations were scaled down,” Wiesen said, explaining that a study on the buildings calling for further fixes is a sort-of wish list for the board. “You have to prioritize. You have to balance wants versus needs.”

And the school board decided to start out with needs.

“When the project is done, it will speak for itself,” Adams-King said. “It’s academically sound and financially responsible. It enhances education without being a burden to taxpayers.”

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