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Owego board hears new elementary school update

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The new Owego Elementary School is shown in this drawing. / PROVIDED

Written by **Meghin Delaney** @PSBMeghinD

OWEGO — Initial site construction and other groundwork is progressing as planned for the new Owego Elementary School, and district officials say the project is ahead of schedule.

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District Superintendent William Russell updated board and community members on the project at a meeting Thursday night at Owego Free Academy.

The final bids from contractors are due Tuesday — district officials extended the deadline a week in light of the recent holidays — and the board will award bids at its next meeting at the end of January, Russell said. He expects the bids to be competitive.

Meanwhile, land is being brought in to raise the site of the building above the flood plain. Russell said he expects this portion of the



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work to be finished within seven or eight days.

“By next week, the general contractor will begin establishing foundations for the building,” Russell said.

A portion of the construction bids were awarded in October and construction began just before Thanksgiving.

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The new elementary school is being built after flooding from Tropical Storm Lee in 2011 forced the closure of the school on Christa McAuliffe Boulevard, a part of the district’s main campus on Sheldon Guile Boulevard.

Since the flooding, students in kindergarten through fourth grade have attended the former Linneaus West School in the Union-Endicott district, a lengthy bus ride. Students in fifth grade attend the middle school, located on the main campus.

At the district’s October meeting, a total of \$13 million was awarded in funding for construction related to site work, foundation and steel work, a portion of the electric work and for installing geothermal wells. The total cost of demolition and construction is estimated to be between \$50 million and \$60 million, officials have said previously.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is covering 85 to 90 percent of the cost to rebuild the flood-damaged school.

The additional funding approved by a public referendum will go toward four areas of the school that FEMA declined to fund.

FEMA aid covers replacement of the previous facilities. Areas in the new building not covered by federal funds are an auditorium, which the previous 48-year-old school did not have; a geothermal heating system; two large group instructional spaces; and a literacy, staff development and book storage area. The \$11 million in state funds and the local share will be used for these areas.

A district-wide referendum in October allows officials to use \$9.6 million from the state and \$1.5 million out of a district capital reserve fund. The money from the state will be fully reimbursed, and the project did not include any new taxes for residents, district officials said.

The new school is scheduled to open for the 2015-16 school year.



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