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ADVT

# Delays persist in replacing several OA building

## Administration, maintenance buildings hit by flood

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Written by **Jennifer Micale**

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**OWEGO** — While the Owego-Apalachin school district is making progress in replacing its flood-damaged [elementary school](#), it's hitting roadblocks when it comes to three other buildings.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency received materials in early July related to the replacement of the district's maintenance facility and storage garage on Elm Street, as well as its Talcott Street administrative building. All sustained 6 to 7 feet of flood water in the wake of Tropical Storm Lee, which also damaged parts of Owego Free Academy and inundated Owego Elementary [School](#).

The district hasn't received answers from the federal agency, and the project keeps on switching hands, Superintendent William Russell said during Thursday's Board of [Education](#) meeting.

"They are apparently back to some of their old tricks," he said.

OA is no stranger to holdups in the remediation process. After five months of [research](#), a team of local experts submitted its cost

analysis of the damage and estimated repairs for OES to a FEMA team that reviewed and validated the work. But that team was later replaced with a different group of FEMA officials who imposed additional tests and repeatedly challenged the district's damage estimates.

In May, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer met with FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate to speed up several recovery projects snagged by bureaucratic holdups, including OES.

Russell said he'd reach out for "more political help" for the replacement of the Talcott and Elm street buildings.

The district is now in the design phase for the new elementary school, which it hopes to open in two years.

On Thursday, representatives from Highland Associates, the architectural and engineering firm hired by the district to oversee the project, outlined the design process for board members and residents. They spent part of this week interviewing district staff about their vision for the new school and plan to return next week to resume the process.

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