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## Fairfield plans to build 3 new schools

### Central Elementary, Freshman School would be torn down and replaced with two new elementary schools and a new freshman building, pending voter approval of a bond issue.

By Eric Robinette

Staff Writer

**FAIRFIELD** — Fairfield City Schools plans to tear down Central Elementary and the Freshman School and replace them with two new elementary schools and a new freshman building, pending approval by voters of a bond issue that may be on this November's ballot, Superintendent Paul Otten said Monday.

The exact amount of the bond issue has yet to be determined, Otten said, but would be for the 2015-16 school year. The building project has a \$73 million price tag, with \$54 million to be paid locally and \$19 million to be paid by the state. The new buildings could open by 2015, and it would be the first major building project since the high school began construction in 1994.

The school board Monday unanimously approved a resolution to accept the state's offer of financial assistance, faced with the knowledge that they could lose funding if they did not accept the offer now.

The action does not guarantee a bond issue will appear before residents in November, according to district spokeswoman Gina Gentry-Fletcher.

"Basically, what we would be looking at is moving forward this November for a bond issue with the community, and if that would get approved, we would move forward for the 2015-16 school year. I think it would take at least a year and a half to get it under way," Otten said.

The Ohio School Facilities Commission has been providing a share of major construction costs for other school districts in Butler County. Middletown and Hamilton schools both embarked on projects to construct new school buildings in recent years.

"The OSFC has finally pulled our number and said we're going to move forward. It will drastically change Fairfield City Schools as we know it for the better," Otten said.

The new Central Elementary would be located behind the current Central and Freshman schools, both on Dixie Highway. The new freshman school would be located across the street from Fairfield High School on property the district already owns, according to Otten.

"We actually would build an additional elementary school, and that site has not yet been determined. But all of our elementaries would be K-5 elementary schools, and then we would have two middle schools," Otten said.

"One would be the current Intermediate building, and the other will be in the current Middle School. Those would be (grades) six, seven, eight buildings ... it would reduce our transitions all the way down to three," he said.

The extra elementary school would be needed because fifth-graders would be moving into the elementaries, he said.

This plan is based on community input that was taken in 2011 to gauge how residents would like to see schools configured in the future, Otten said.

When the plan was presented to building staff at the end of this school year, "Let me tell you, it was almost a standing ovation," the superintendent said.

Board vice president Don Nuss said that with this money becoming available, "The stars are aligned ... It's exciting times, it really is. This can really take this school district to the next level."

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