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Major work planned at Larkin High

Elgin High stadium to see upgrades

By: Rafael Guerrero



School District U46 plans to spend about \$7 million to expand and renovate Larkin High School's D wing to accommodate changes needed as the district makes the transition to a career pathways system, officials said.

Major renovation work at Larkin High School and improvements to Elgin High School's Memorial Stadium are among the big-ticket items on School District U46's \$41.3 million capital projects schedule for 2020.

The list was presented to the school board this week, and work on some items could begin as soon as this winter, officials said. Most, however, will be done in the summer, when students are not in school.

The price tag is about the same as what the district spent this year on capital improvements. Money for the work will be earmarked in U46's operations and maintenance fund and its fire prevention, life and safety fund, officials said.

Projects include \$7 million to improve and expand Larkin's D wing, which is being done to accommodate the district's new career pathways program expected to launch in the 2021-22 school year, Chief Operations Officer Jeff King said.

More details on what the work at the Elgin-based school will entail should be available in a couple of months, district spokeswoman Mary Fergus said Wednesday, but it will require 13 to 16 weeks to complete and may necessitate classes moving out of the wing.

"We're going to have close off sections of the building probably after spring break and bring mobiles into the back of the building to accommodate classrooms," King said.

Another project that may require longer than the summer to complete are renovations to Elgin's Memorial Stadium. The \$3.8 million job "may be similar to what we did in South Elgin," where a new track, press box and LED lighting were installed, Plant Operations Director Sheila Downs said.

"That is another one that we're looking at potentially moving up the timeline," Downs said.

Also on the capital projects list is \$5.5 million to complete the interior of the district's under-construction welcome center and transportation facility at 1019 E. Chicago St., Elgin, and \$1.5 million for South Elgin High School's media and digital arts academy, which is being converted into a magnet academy.

The district will also be doing maintenance projects at a number of schools, including painting, window improvements, HVAC upgrades and parking lot work. Elgin and South Elgin high schools will be getting new chiller units at a cost of \$3.1 million, Downs said.

"They're both at the end of their life cycles," she said. "The goal would be to have everything done during the winter season so that come spring and cooling season, we can use the new chillers. Those are two projects we are expediting."

Because some jobs are targeted for the winter, the proposed work list was presented to the board earlier than usual, U46 CEO Tony Sanders said.

"Historically, this report comes forward in January or February," Sanders said. "I think this shows you the desire to move up the bidding process."