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## **Washington School site to be cleared as Little Ferry Public Schools plans for the future**

LITTLE FERRY - Little Ferry Public Schools Board of Education continues moving the district forward with plans to clear the Washington School building site in preparation for a new school.

“In addition to establishing a safe physical space, we envision a new school that is designed to meet current educational standards and practices,” said Superintendent Frank Scarafile. “This refers to appropriately sized classrooms, modern and efficient systems that support a healthy environment, and accessibility features so the building is welcoming to every student.”

The 109-year-old Washington School has served generations of families in the community of Little Ferry. The district, in discussion with community stakeholders, weighed preserving the historic structure against maintaining both its fiscal responsibility to the community and the highest educational standards for students.

Despite repairs over the years to preserve the building, Washington School no longer met building and accessibility codes, and classrooms and other spaces became outdated and in need of extensive updates. That led to the decision to vacate the building in 2018 and move pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade classes into modular units and Memorial Middle School.

Little Ferry Public Schools began working with an architect in 2018, who at that time estimated that the building would need \$8.3 million worth of repairs. That figure could be higher in today’s market and doesn’t include costs for a much-needed addition to support current enrollment and the modernization of spaces. The Board of Education believes that addressing the extensive needs of the school by making these costly repairs would not be fiscally responsible for the community.

The initial phase of the project includes awarding a bid for the contractor that will complete the clearing of the site. Work is slated to begin in June, following the completion of this academic year, and is expected to take four months. The site will be secured by a full perimeter fence prior to any work being done.

The Board of Education is taking steps toward a bond referendum to ask voters’ permission to sell bonds to generate upfront funds for the construction of a new school. That vote could be held

within a year. With voter approval, a bond referendum would bring the district a new type of state funding for this large-scale capital project.

“We are excited to continue the Little Ferry Board of Education’s work toward improving our schools and preparing for the future,” Scarafile added. “We are grateful for the board’s work to position our district for success for many years to come.”

Little Ferry Public Schools has activities planned to honor the history of Washington School and make connections between those who taught in and attended the school and the current and future school community. The district will inform the community about the activities and progress of the project through a dedicated website, [lfboe.org/LittleFerryFuture](http://lfboe.org/LittleFerryFuture). Questions about the project can be emailed to: [LittleFerryFuture@lfboe.org](mailto:LittleFerryFuture@lfboe.org).

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