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Linden Elementary to cost an additional \$370,000

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The Columbus Public Schools Board of Education will be asked to add \$370,000 to the construction budget for Linden Elementary School for issues related to a plumbing contractor who defaulted.

The new school, which replaced an aging building near the intersection of Westerville Road and Cleveland Avenue, was completed last spring at a building cost of about \$7.3 million.

The CPS neighborhood Schools Development Partnership – a volunteer panel that oversees the district’s school rebuilding effort – approved the additional sum at its March 24 meeting; the board will vote April 5.

If approved, the funding will come from the district’s facilities master plan fund.

The amount covers costs incurred by Linden’s general construction contractor, Miles McClellan, after the plumbing contractor originally hired for the job defaulted, according to Carole Olshavsky, CPS senior executive for capital improvements.

When LTM Plumbing and HVAC, Inc., backed out of the job in July 2003, some of the work it had completed was faulty and had to be redone, she said.

That had a ripple effect. For example, some completed masonry walls had to be removed to correct plumbing mistakes, she said, and plumbing delays affected the schedule of work.

“For example, paving had to be done at a different time of year (than originally scheduled) and that had additional costs,” she said.

The \$370,000 is on top of the amount the district expects to receive from LTM’s bonding company, Erie Insurance, against whom the district has filed a claim.

LTM’s bond equaled \$360,000, compared to the company’s contract amount.

“About \$100,000 had already been paid from materials,” said Olshavsky, adding that the remainder went to pay the new contractor and for corrective work.

She said that paying the additional amount will not affect the funds available for the 38 schools in segments of one and two of the district’s building plan. A revised plan for segment one reduced costs in several areas; particularly, changes to the plan for the Fort Hayes Career Center lowered segment one costs by \$4.1 million.

Olshavsky said the Ohio School Facilities Commission allowed CPS to keep that money as “co-shared” funds that can be used on any segment one project.

She added that, while the costs incurred by the default are “unfortunate,” a repeat of the problem should be able to be avoided.

For one thing, she said, changes to the state contract provide for more stringent review of the companies that bid on contracts.