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Posted: 4:19 p.m. Friday, Dec. 5, 2014

## Fairfield Stadium to get new bleachers, restrooms

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By Eric Robinette

Staff Writer

**FAIRFIELD** — Fairfield Stadium will be getting several new amenities as part of a \$2.6 million project approved by the board of education.

The stadium at 5050 Dixie Hwy., will get new bleachers and restrooms, as well as a new concession stand, entrance and field house, after the district fast-tracked the project by approving it Thursday at a work session.

"We want to have it up and ready for the next school year, in the fall," said district spokeswoman Gina Gentry-Fletcher.

The new facilities will replace those that are about 50 years old, said Gentry-Fletcher. The current bleachers seat 2,500 people, but the new ones will have 3,300 seats, including 2,500 home-side seats. The new bleachers will also add handicapped-accessible seats. New end zone bleachers for students, including band members, will accommodate 1,000 people.

The money for the project will come out of the district's general fund and not call for additional taxpayer dollars, she said. However, the district is working on fundraisers, such as selling naming rights, to help reduce the cost.

"I think it's something that's been in discussion for a long, long time, the stadium being as old as it is," said Fairfield Athletic Director Mark Harden. "There have been multiple times where we looked at putting a new stadium behind the high school or just continuing to renovate where we're at. Over time, the bleachers just got to the point where we just didn't feel like they were safe anymore, and we wanted to do something sort of quickly."

Building codes require that when new bleachers are installed, new restroom facilities must be built also, according to the district.

"Our restroom facilities were beyond bad. They were awful," Harden said. "... with our restrooms already being in the field house, it made sense to do a new field house as well. It had been falling apart. We had to roof it, there was crumbling masonry, and it wasn't big enough for the space."

When people in wheelchairs have attended games they've had to watch them from the track, which is unsafe, Gentry-Fletcher said. The new stadium will have 16 spaces specifically for wheelchairs and 16 additional bench seats that are accessible.

This work follows the installation of artificial turf in 2012 to Fairfield's football field. Fairfield had been one of the only high school stadiums in Butler County to be using a natural field when the artificial turf was installed. That project was made possible by a \$600,000 donation from Mercy Health.

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