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## Some win, some lose in funding game

### Lawmakers obtain \$17 million of projects in capital improvements budget

By **TOM JACKSON** [jackson@sanduskyregister.com](mailto:jackson@sanduskyregister.com)

#### COLUMBUS

Money is tight in the state budget these days, but local lawmakers report they've been able to obtain more than \$17 million worth of construction projects for Erie and Ottawa counties in the 2008 Ohio Capital Appropriations Budget.

"I'm pleased Ottawa County and Erie County did better than anyone could have expected," said state Rep. Chris Redfern, D-Catawba Island, who worked with state Sen. Mark Wagoner, R-Toledo, to obtain the projects.

Ohio lawmakers pass operations budgets and capital budgets in alternating years. The Ohio General Assembly sent the capital budget to Gov. Ted Strickland earlier this week, and he has 10 days to sign it. The governor will have the option of using line-item vetoes to remove projects he doesn't like, said the governor's spokesman, Keith Dailey.

Dailey said he can't comment on whether any Sandusky-area projects could be threatened, and said the governor has to complete his review of the bill.

Wagoner said he doubts the governor will use his budget ax on any local projects.

"I think it's very unlikely," Wagoner said. "The governor's office did not raise any concerns about any of the dollars in there for Erie and Ottawa counties."

Here are the projects in Erie County:

n The Ohio Veterans Home in Perkins Township will receive more than \$7 million for various upgrades. Officials at the veterans home could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

n BGSU Firelands in Huron will get \$1.6 million for renovations, as well as improvements to the James H. McBride Arboretum.

The money includes \$298,536 for basic maintenance and \$934,363 for a planned new allied health building, still years away, to house the rapidly growing health care programs, said Lesley Ruskowski, a spokeswoman for BGSU Firelands.

The bill also includes \$378,000 for the arboretum, including funds for a new entrance, parking lot and public restroom, Ruskowski said.

Because of the growth at the campus, "our parking lots are full so often, parking for the arboretum has become an issue," she said.

n The Division of Watercraft office in Sandusky got \$2 million. The office is part of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

n Kelleys Island will obtain \$50,000 to help build a public restroom.

A public restroom is much needed because the island village's downtown doesn't have one, Mayor Rob Quinn

said.

"It's been an issue for all of the restaurants and bars and businesses," Quinn said. "They've been good about letting people in."

The \$50,000, combined with \$150,000 Redfern helped the village obtain earlier, will make it possible for construction to go forward, said Quinn. He said he hopes to complete work this fall so the restroom will be available for the 2009 tourist season.

n The Inland Seas Maritime Museum in Vermilion, run by the Great Lakes Historical Society, will receive \$200,000 for improvements.

Here are the projects in Ottawa County:

n Marblehead Lighthouse State Park will get \$25,000 to build a replica of the 1876 Life Saving Station building. The project was backed by Marblehead community leaders, the Village of Marblehead and the Marblehead Lighthouse Historical Society.

n Camp Perry will get \$1.5 million for improvements to its facilities.

n The Middle Bass Island State Park Marina will get \$4 million.

n Stone Laboratory on Gibraltar Island at Put-in-Bay, run by the Ohio Sea Grant program, will get \$250,000 for classroom improvements.

Redfern is a Democrat and Wagoner is a Republican, but each said the other lawmaker cooperated to provide as many projects as possible to north-central Ohio.

"Mark and I have the kind of relationship that I think benefits our area," Redfern said.

Wagoner said he sits on the Senate Finance Committee, which writes the budget bills, and said Redfern's close relationship with the Strickland administration also was useful.



Redfern



Wagoner