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Firms chosen for Natrona County school construction projects

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Firms chosen for Natrona County school construction projects

By JACKIE BORCHARDT Star-Tribune staff writer trib.com | Posted: Wednesday, February 2, 2011 12:15 am | (5) Comments

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Firm selection committees

* New high school campus: Elizabeth Horsch (trustee), Shawna Trujillo (principal), Lauren Volk (SFC), Paul Meyer (SFC), Nancy Nuttbrock (SFC)

* Kelly Walsh High School: Donn McCall (trustee), Brad Diller (principal), Nancy Nuttbrock (SFC), Tanner Norton (SFC), Dave Davis

* Natrona County High School: Audrey Cotherman (trustee), Dean Kelly (principal), Wally Diller (SFC), Rich Hardt (SFC), Scott Schutte

Architects and construction managers at risk have been chosen for \$100 million in school construction projects in Natrona County.

Bidding for renovations to Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools and construction of a new high school campus opened last fall. Teams of local and state representatives interviewed applicants, checked references and ranked finalists.

The state School Facilities Commission will negotiate contracts with the top firms, which will be announced today. If a contract can't be negotiated, the commission goes to the second- and then third-ranked group.

The new campus, which will house alternative Roosevelt High School, the Transitions credit recovery program, Star Lane Center and the new Center for Advanced Professional Studies, or CAPS, is

planned to house state-of-the art labs and equipment. The project will follow a design-bid-build process, and the committee selected Cunningham Group of Minneapolis for the architect. Bids for construction will go out after design is completed.

RB+B Architects of Fort Collins, Colo., and Sampson Construction Company Inc. of Cheyenne were chosen for renovations to Kelly Walsh.

The NCHS committee chose Bassetti Architects of Seattle as the architect and Adolfson & Peterson of Wyoming as the construction manager at risk for renovations to the historic landmark. The firm specializes in historic preservation of buildings and has vast experience with historical schools, said Audrey Cotherman, chairwoman of the school board.

Cotherman, who represented the board on the NCHS selection committee, said she was impressed that the firm's previous designs allowed schools to stay in session, safely, during construction.

“[The committee] spent a day calling people to be sure whatever they put in their application and proposal they could back up with people that they work for,” Cotherman said.

Although out-of-state firms were selected to design the projects, Cotherman said she was confident the work will generate local jobs. Local construction managers at risk were chosen for the renovations, and preference will be given to in-state firms that bid on the new high school campus.

A couple of the firms applied for more than one project, but in the end, committee choices didn't overlap, said Brandon Finney, contract manager for the state School Facilities Commission.

“It came down to who's qualified to do this particular job,” Finney said. “They all could have done each job, but it's about who is better suited for what.”

Intensive design sessions with community members and architects, called charettes, are planned for March and April.

Preliminary timelines had construction beginning in fall 2012, with all projects finished by fall 2016. Once contracts are finalized, timelines for planning and construction will be drafted.

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