

Contracts awarded for 2 new schools

Bids for 2 elementary schools will be accepted in January

By Jimmie Covington

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DeSoto County school board members on Monday awarded contracts for construction of two new middle schools and received a briefing on design plans for two new elementary schools.

Architect Gary Bailey of Tupelo said Lewisburg Middle School and Center Hill Middle school are expected to be completed in time for the opening of school a year from now.

He said the timetable for a new Lewisburg primary school and a DeSoto Central area elementary school calls for the projects to be bid sometime around Jan. 1 with a 16-month construction schedule and completion before the start of the 2010 school year.

Bailey, along with Stan Klenk of Allen & Hoshall engineering firm, presented the designs to board members.

The board awarded Webb Building Corp. of Memphis a \$12.4 million contract to build Lewisburg Middle and Murphy & Sons Inc. of Southaven an \$11.94 million contract for Center Hill Middle.

On the Lewisburg project, C & M Builders of Southaven had a lower bid, but after meeting with their attorney in closed session, the board ruled that the bid did not meet specifications. Board attorney Keith Treadway said the bid included a contractor that did not file a required "certificate of responsibility."

The four new schools plus the new Lake Cormorant High School are being financed by the \$60 million bond issue approved by voters in May.

Also Monday, board members approved repairing the fire-damaged DeSoto Central High School football stadium on an emergency basis so that the work can be completed as soon as possible.

Robert Earl Phillips, school district physical plant director, said Sept. 18 is the target date for completion. DeSoto Central's first home game is Sept. 5. No decision has been announced on where that game will be played.

A July 11 fire did major damage to the middle section of the home team side of the stadium. Structural repairs will have to be made, and about 200 seats will have to be replaced.

A full cost estimate is not yet available, but the total cost to the school district is

expected to be only a \$25,000 insurance deductible amount.

Before designating the repairs an emergency, school officials sought and received clearance from the state auditor's office.

Police arrested two young boys at the scene of the fire and charged each as a "child in need of supervision."

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