

HERMITAGE

'Green' tech center specs didn't discourage bidders

Sharon Herald May 7th, 2010

By Joe Pinchot, *Herald Staff Writer*

The four sets of bids to build the technology center in Hermitage's LindenPointe technical business park came in at about the pre-bid estimate, but there might be a problem with the apparent low general construction bid.

Of the seven general construction bids opened Thursday, Veon Construction Corp., West Middlesex, tendered the lowest at \$3,435,000, with Rien Construction, Brookfield, behind at \$3,568,640. The other bids ranged from \$3.6 million to \$3,988,000.

The bidders were required to submit a bid bond of 10 percent of the bid amount. The bid bond guarantees that, should a company be awarded a contract, it can obtain a performance bond for the bid price, said Greer Hayden, president of HHSDR Architects/ Engineers, Sharon. The performance bond is essentially an insurance policy that the project will be completed at the bid price. If the contractor does not complete the project, the company that issued the performance bond steps in and a new contractor is hired to complete the work. Veon submitted a bid bond, but the bond did not contain an amount. The other bidders specified 10 percent of their bid prices on their bid bonds, as was required in the bid specifications. Assistant City Manager Gary M. Gulla said the city will need solicitor Thomas W. Kuster to render an opinion as to whether Veon was responsive to the specifications.

Other apparent low bids: Rabe Environmental Systems, Erie, \$854,000 for heating, ventilation and air conditioning. The other three bids were \$891,000, \$979,534 and \$989,715.

D.J. Hannon & Sons Inc., New Castle, \$240,590, for plumbing, the lowest of five. The other bids ranged from \$286,000 to \$379,333.

Power Contracting Co., Carnegie, \$722,000, for electrical construction. The other bids ranged from \$777,222 to \$844,000.

Including Veon's bid, the apparent lowest bids total \$5,251,590. Inserting Rien's bid, the total climbs to \$5,385,230. Both totals are under the \$5,450,000 the city has in federal and state construction grants for the project. Overall, officials are happy with the bids, Gulla said.

The contractors also submitted alternate bids to delete a rain garden, pedestrian trail and trailhead, two business incubator suites and videoconferencing equipment, which officials can consider to bring down the cost some.

The 15,000-square-foot tech center will provide five to seven technology business incubator suites, a testing laboratory, and common class, break, meeting, locker and rest rooms.

The center will be built with green characteristics such as natural lighting, a reflective roof, low maintenance materials and a geothermal heating and cooling system, with the hope of being certified as

a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design project. If certified, the tech center will be the first Mercer County building to be so deemed. The green requirements will add more work to the contractors to verify material and waste disposal choices, on top of what the state and federal governments require for their funding.

Hayden said the green requirements do not seem to have discouraged any bidders. "If anything, it encouraged them," he said. "The contractors and trades people I have spoken to seemed pretty excited about it."

The construction site also will act as a training ground for green building techniques. Gulla said the specifications are complicated and will require an extensive review, but officials hope to award contracts May 20.