

Bids high for building at cemetery

By Eric Vo
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WALLINGFORD — A project to construct a new Prince Street facility for the Center Street Cemetery will go back out to bid after the first round yielded bids “significantly in excess” of what the town was anticipating, according to Mayor William W. Dickinson Jr.

The 1,800-square-foot building, designed to look like an Victorian-style barn, will be used to store equipment for managing the cemetery. It will also include a small office and meeting room.

The town purchased two houses on Prince Street to make way for the new building. The cemetery dates back to the 1670s and is the burial site of many influential figures in the town's history.

Five companies submitted bids to complete the project, with Garsan Construction Inc., of Wallingford, quoting the lowest price, \$391,256. With three possible deductions, the project would cost \$382,905.

“It's more than we anticipated,” Dickinson said. “We were anticipating below \$300,000.”

The State Bond Commission approved \$275,000 last year to fund the project.

Steve Lazarus, the architect for the building, said he is almost finished with making changes to reduce costs. The changes, Lazarus said, do not affect the design or schematics of the building itself.

“We've made (the building) as small as it can be to meet the association's needs,” Lazarus said. “It's not a matter of us saying, ‘Let's make the building smaller.’ There are some things we can do to reduce the cost that won't have a detrimental effect.”

Those changes include reducing the amount of trim work on the exterior of the building, he said.

Lazarus will meet with the town's purchasing department on Monday to bid out the project a second time.

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Several town councilors support a second round of bids, noting the necessity of the building. If the bids are high again, there are multiple ways to finance the project, said Councilor Vincent Testa, a Democrat.

“We agreed there's a need to do something over there,” he said. “We just have to get together and decide with the administration as a whole how committed we are to getting the project done.”

Town Council Vice Chairman Tom Laffin, a Republican, echoed Testa's comments.

“These are very qualified people that care about the town and organization they're working with,” he said. “They're highly respected and organized people, so I trust their efforts and their motivations to work through the problems.”

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