Hancock to seek bids on 2 big construction jobs

Controversial labor agreements not part of $40 million plans

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Bids for two large construction projects at Hancock College — minus any local labor agreements — will be sought next month after the board of trustees unanimously authorized their solicitation.

The board decided Dec. 14 to seek bids for the college's Public Safety Complex in Lompoc and the Childcare Center addition on the Santa Maria campus without any stipulations for hiring local labor.

Trustee Tim Bennett has twice proposed that a requirement for hiring local labor be attached to the college's Measure I maintenance and construction projects. The latest proposal was not included in the two projects discussed Tuesday because it had not been reviewed by the trustees prior to the meeting.

Board members decided they didn't want delay the projects for another two to three months while the proposal was reviewed, according to Rebecca Alarcio, director of public affairs.

"The bottom line is the board voted to move ahead to solicit bids as written in this item," she said.

The board held a workshop two weeks ago to consider ways to hire local labor. Project Labor Agreements were discussed but not supported when the college's attorney, Sherman Wong, showed the trustees that the Measure I construction projects were already hiring more than 63 percent local contractors.

Representatives of local labor associations also ripped the proposed Project Labor Agreements, saying 85 to 90 percent of their members were non-union and that the agreements favored union shop companies.

"When all of these local hire agreements come up in the county, they're addressing a problem that doesn't really exist," said Robin Hayhurst, executive director of the Santa Maria Valley Contractors Association.

Hayhurst said agreements such as these wind up reducing the number of local bidders because of their added paperwork and regulation requirements.

Apparently satisfied with hiring on current projects, the board approved solicitation of bids for the Public Safety Complex, the largest Measure I project.

Located at the Lompoc Valley Center, the $34.7 million complex will consist of a 36,678-square-foot classroom and office building, a 12,286-square-foot storage and vehicle maintenance building and an 8,568-square-foot, six-story fire tower.

It will also have a 1-mile emergency vehicle operation course for training police officers as well as a city grid driving course, low-speed driving course, quarter-mile fitness track, obstacle course, training scenario buildings, shooting range, outdoor training ground and parking for about 150 cars.

The Childcare Center addition will increase the size of the center by 6,800 square feet and replace a building that houses a parent and child study center. It will add classrooms, allow the center to include more children and provide space for a student learning lab.

Cost for the project is estimated at $4.89 million.

Alarcio said the board decided to move forward with the two projects, then respond to Bennett's latest proposal before any more projects come up for bid.