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Bids roll in for Waterstone campus Orange County OK'd plans for Durham Tech satellite, spent \$1.25M to obtain site

By Emily Coakley

Durham Technical Community College received several more bids for its campus at Waterstone than in the first round.

Officials opened nine bids last week. The first time Durham Tech solicited bids for the project, one was submitted. That led school officials to move opening the campus from August 2007 to January 2008.

Pam Jones, Orange County's purchasing director, said the bids this time ranged from a low of \$5.5 million to a high of nearly \$6.2 million.

Orange County spent \$1.25 million for the 20 acres where the satellite campus will be located. The county will also maintain the buildings. The commissioners have asked the project's designers to add a variety of green elements -- such as a system that captures rainwater for use in toilets -- to the first building.

The commissioners contributed money to have sustainable building features designed. Those elements are included as add-ons to the bids, and in August, the commissioners determine which elements they want to include, Jones said.

Durham Tech officials last month said they talked to construction companies that were too busy to build the project. There was also concern about the yearlong time frame to build the 40,000-square-foot building, as orders for steel have been delayed recently.

After the first round, school officials decided to move the building's opening date by an entire semester instead of one or two months.

The project's designer will take a closer look at the bids opened last week and certify one, Jones said.

The first building will be two stories with classrooms, labs and a small library, according to Durham Tech. The college has plans to eventually build up to five buildings on the Waterstone campus. When it's built, many classes Durham Tech already offers in Orange County will be moved there.