



GREATER MIDDLETOWN

Long Hill Project Within Budget

By **BILL DALEY**
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Local Contractor Has Low Bid Of \$3.1 Million

MIDDLETOWN — A city firm is the apparent low bidder to restore Long Hill Estate with a \$3.1 million base bid that falls in the budgeted range of the project.

Kronenberger & Sons Restoration of Middletown was the lowest of five contractors bidding for the chance to restore the historic city-owned mansion. The others are: Rudolph Netch Construction Co. Inc. of Ches-

ter, \$3.2 million; Salce Contracting Associates Inc. of Stratford, \$3.3 million; Acmat Corp. of New Britain, \$3.4 million; and Lawrence Brunoli Inc. of Farmington, \$3.5 million.

Members of the project's building committee voted Thursday to award the bid to Kronenberger if and when all the bid documents are processed and approved by the city.

The mansion, home to Col. Clar-

ence S. Wadsworth, a turn-of-the-century environmentalist and philanthropist, is being restored to serve as a wedding and conference center. The surrounding land, about 100

acres, is to be devoted to passive recreation.

"This is terrific," Mayor Domonique Thornton said. "He [Kronenberger] is an excellent contractor, and we should always strive for local firms whenever possible. ... I'm just very elated he was selected to be the successful low bidder."

Thornton said Kronenberger has been involved in the KidCity museum and Oddfellows youth theater projects — works that involved

adaptive reuse of historic buildings. Kronenberger also completed repairs on the venerable deKoven House community center and is now working on repairs to the Mansfield House, home of the Middlesex County Historical Society.

"The fact he's done other projects of historical significance shows he has sensitivity," Thornton said.

Cynthia Wilcox, a staffer in the city's municipal development office,

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said Brian Kronenberger has long been interested in preserving Long Hill, which over the years had been vandalized and torched. He was a member of the city's preservation board, which took a strong position on saving the building.

"It's appropriate he gets the job," she said.

Kronenberger had been the low bidder of only two bids received when the project was originally put out in August. Trouble was, that original bid was about \$1 million more than budgeted.

The scope of the renovation work was scaled back to bring the work more into financial line. Some of the economies include: Installing carpeting in some area where the original marble and terrazzo floors were to be restored; using fixed windows instead of the more expensive kind that open and close; leaving much of the second floor office space unfinished; and putting off creation of a caretaker's apartment and meeting room in the basement.

But Joyce Kirkpatrick, chairwoman of the Wadsworth Mansion Building Committee, cautions that none of these items cut from the base bid should be written off permanently, yet. There may be money found in the budget, or there may be gifts or grants to cover some of the expense.

Wilcox said the bid document outlines 14 proposed additions to the project. She hopes to apply for grants from the state historical commission to do three of these, restoration of the estate's tennis pavilion, creation of a colonnade and rose trellis, and installation of an ornamental roof balustrade.