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Local contractor the low bidder on Wadsworth restoration project

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MIDDLETOWN — After opening the bids for the restoration of the Wadsworth mansion Thursday, the city is expected to award the contract to a local company.

Kronenberger & Sons Construction submitted a base bid of \$3.1 million, the lowest of five offers. Rudolph Netsch Construction of Chester submitted the second lowest base bid, at \$3.25 million. The highest base bid was \$3.54 million.

W. Lee Osborne of the Wadsworth Mansion Building Committee said the city is expected to sign the contract within 10 days after the bids are reviewed to make sure everything is in order.

The project entails converting the former convent into a banquet hall and meeting facility with office space on the second

floor. The city owns the mansion and the property's 103 acres, which are located off Wadsworth Street and Laurel Grove Road.

Of the five companies that bid on the project, Kronenberger is the only one from Middletown. Other local projects it has been involved in include work on the DeKoven House, the Oddfellows Playhouse and KidCity.

"They do a lot in town, which is nice," said Joyce Kirkpatrick, building committee chairwoman.

Mayor Dominique Thornton said she was pleased that the project is being taken care of by a company that has proven to be sensitive to the historical significance of other local buildings.

There were a few snags in the process. The building committee first opened during the summer, but all were over budget. After a few revisions to the plan, the

project went out to bid again. Kirkpatrick said she's glad the project is back on track.

"Until you test the waters, you can never tell how things are going to work out," she said. "It's wonderful to know the project is going forward."

The city officially began the project after voters approved the \$3.8 million plan by a slim margin in a referendum last year. The 9,000-square-foot mansion, which Col. Clarence S. Wadsworth built in 1917, was last used by the Religious of Our Lady of Cenacle as a convent and retreat.

Committee members have said the project is meant to maintain the spirit of the mansion, while making it practical for modern use.

Construction is expected to begin within 90 days after the contract is signed, and if all goes as planned, the mansion should be open by summer of 1999.