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How to manage next big project? County considering options

By [Eric Deines](#) | Independent Tribune

CONCORD — Before the new county jail project sparked some community controversy, there was some disagreement among the Cabarrus County Board of Commissioners as to how to manage the project.

While some commissioners favored a standard construction manager for the project, the majority of the board opted for a construction manager at-risk, which gives a "guaranteed maximum price" for a project and absorbs the cost of most additions over that figure.

But as the first phase of the project developed, the price seemed anything but fixed, as the county was asked several times to make costly change orders for the project.

In the first weeks of construction in 2006, the board added \$200,000 to the fixed contract provided by Turner Construction, the chosen manager at-risk.

Now, as the county begins design for a \$4.5 million county satellite campus building, the commission will consider once again its management options for a large project.

Deputy County Manager Mike Downs told commissioners Monday that if they want to use a construction manager at-risk, it's better to bring one aboard during the design phase of the project. "Now is the time to do it," Downs said at a Monday work session.

Because Turner Construction was hired after the design phase of the jail, it was forced to make some changes after the fact, Downs said.

Downs said involving a construction manager in the design phase allows the manager to identify some opportunities to save and spot potential problems in the design that could cost in the design phase.

During the first phase of the jail project, commissioners approved budget changes for clearing debris from the site and for state and city requirements — things a construction manager may have identified if involved in the initial phases of a project.

Three of the sitting commissioners — Chairman Jay White, Grace Mynatt and Liz Poole — were not on the commission when the board chose to use a construction manager at-risk.

Mynatt said she planned to meet with the county manager and staff to discuss details of the two options.

Commissioners plan to discuss and select one of the management options at their December 15 meeting.

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