

# KCB city hall rebuild draws two bids

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KEY COLONY BEACH — Only two contractors submitted bids to build a new city hall even though it was announced

at a Key Colony Beach City Commission meeting last month that upwards of 22 responses had been received.

The two bids, at \$8.37 million and \$12.487 million, were above the \$7.8 million

projection made by City Administrator Dave Turner in April.

During a hastily called public meeting scheduled through public notice late June 2, the city opened the construction

bids immediately after the 4 p.m. June 5 deadline. The setting was along the side of West Ocean Drive in front of the city's trailers, which have housed staff since Hurricane Irma damaged the old city hall.

About 30 interested residents gathered for the bid readings. Several shared outward bewilderment and disgust at the nature of the communication and the setting.

One resident, a 45-year

contractor, called the process "a sham." Another resident who's "handled construction projects from \$500 million to a billion dollars" said, "I've never seen

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Above, the old Key Colony Beach city hall looks sturdy from the exterior but city officials say storm damage has rendered them unusable. Key Colony Beach Administrator Dave Turner, far right, opens two bids submitted to build the Middle Keys city's new administrative office.



## Hall

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anything like this." Even one

City Commissioner said in a text message, "Yep, we are the laughingstock of the state."

Some speculated that the city's original plan wasn't to

conduct the openings in public given the late notice even though the city has known for weeks that June 5 was the deadline for bids to be received. If the bids were not revealed in a public setting, the city would have violated state law, namely Title XVIII Public Lands and Property, Chapter 255 Section 0518, which requires sealed public bids received by a municipality to be open at a public meeting with the name of each bidder and the price submitted in the bid announced.

Turner announced the two bids — one by general contractor Hands on Builders of Miami for \$8.375 million and the other by J.C. Pierson Construction of Alabama for \$12.487 million. Representatives for both firms were present at the brief

meeting.

When asked why he stated at the May 18 City Commission meeting that about 22 bids had been received, Turner said instead of actual bids, those were "plan holdings," which is essentially a compilation of all vendors who have made inquiries but not submitted bid packets.

Turner added such inquiries were generally made so those firms are viewed as viable sub contractors for the eventual general contractor.

One resident asked Turner whether bid bonds or construction and performance bonds, which act as insurance and protection for the city if either of the bid packages are accepted, had been submitted. Turner said neither one included those.



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### Residents gather to hear city hall bids revealed.

The resident said afterward that without those two bonds "chances are not all expenses for the reconstruction will be included."

One local contractor, requesting anonymity, speculated why there were so few contractors who bid on the project.

"The city's plans were changed late. There was no transparency, a lot of confusion and disorganization," he said.

And while it's unknown whether either of these two comprehensive bids is fully

inclusive, this contractor said they are not and that specifically, landscaping, for one, is excluded.

Rebuilding city hall is atop Mayor Patti Trefry and Turner's objectives. Key Colony Beach's city hall has not been home to city staff for almost six years since Irma. While it looks sturdy from the outside, the building is below flood level and needs to be demolished, Turner says.

A mere 100 yards from the former city hall, the Key Colony Beach staff of 18, with its own police force, public works, building department and administrative personnel, has been operating out of three leased trailers, which one resident said has cost "millions of dollars" over that time.

The City Commission's next step will be to evaluate and rank the bids in a closed session for final consideration and action. Depending on how the commission assesses these bids, a decision regarding new construction versus refurbishing of the current city hall will be made.