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\$30M in contracts awarded for museum

► Six contractors to work on GulfQuest

By **ROBERT MCCLENDON**
Staff Reporter

The Mobile City Council on Tuesday awarded \$30 million to six contractors set to do work on the GulfQuest maritime museum and ferry landing.

Councilman John Williams called the museum "one of the biggest investments in our city in a long time."

Four of the six winning bidders are based in Mobile. Three firms who received previous contracts for work on the site

and its foundation are all from Mobile, as was the firm that designed the project.

Tuesday's contracts represent the bulk of the construction, leaving only minor contracts still to be awarded.

"We were able to achieve what we set out to achieve, maximum local participation," Mobile Mayor Sam Jones said of the bid process.

Tony Zodrow, director of the museum, said the museum board and the city agreed early on that they wanted as much of the work as possible to go to local firms, so they took the unusual step of breaking up the



Courtesy of GulfQuest museum

An artist's rendering shows the proposed GulfQuest maritime museum from Mobile River at night.

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Contracts awarded for museum

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contract.

If the city kept the project as a single contract, it would have been so large and complex that only large national construction firms would have been able to be competitive, Zodrow said.

The winning firm would then have farmed out the subcontract work to companies that had existing relationships, many of which would likely have been from out of town, he said.

Zodrow estimated the full cost of the museum to be about \$52 million — \$35 million for the construction of the building and \$17 million for the exhibits and furnishings. The museum and landing will be located next to the cruise terminal on the Mobile River.

Winning contractors

- \$5,802,668 to Ben M. Radcliff Contractor Inc. for general trades.
- \$3,870,000 to Batchelor's Mechanical Contractors Inc. for HVAC and plumbing.
- \$5,010,000 to Wayne J. Griffin Electric Inc. for electrical work.
- \$969,000 to Metropolitan Glass Company Inc. for exterior work.
- \$389,800 to Triple "A" Fire Protection Inc. for fire protection.
- \$14,071,000 to W.G. Yates and Sons Construction Company for the structural work.

The undertaking is a partnership between the city and a nonprofit museum board. The city is responsible for the construction of the facility itself, and the museum board is responsible for the furnishings, exhibits and operating costs, estimated to be about \$3.8 million per year.

The city has received about \$18.7 million from the federal government for the museum, which also will be used as a ferry and bus terminal.

More than \$8 million went to create bulkheads and prepare the site and its foundation.

The remaining \$10.2 million will go toward the building's actual construction, said Zodrow.

Much of the federal grant money was a transportation earmark dependent on the construction of a ferry terminal as part of the museum project. Without the ferry terminal, the city would have to repay the money.

Zodrow said that \$25 million from a 2009 bond issue would cover what the grant money didn't.

The museum board is well on its way to meeting

its funding goals, he said, having raised \$7.5 million in private donations and \$4.4 million in federal grants.

As the building begins to rise out of the ground, Zodrow said, the fundraising will get easier.

"There are a good many people who will believe without seeing. They just have faith," he said. "But to make the others believe, for those not on the inside, you have to have something to show them."