

# Projects Offer Cost Comparisons

By MARTHA MAHAN

**FARMINGTON**  
When Farmington public schools open next fall, newly constructed additions will enlarge three elementary buildings. But they will do more than just house kids. To economy minded school people, they will provide a model for evaluation of comparative construction costs.

Each was built under a different formula.

**THE SHIAWASSEE** elementary school addition, a media center and six classrooms, was erected under a method known as construction management. Farmington is the first school district in the state to use the method.

The Larkshire elementary addition, a media center and two classrooms, results from modular construction. Farmington is the first district

outside of Detroit to use this type of building.

The Longacre addition, also housing a media center and two classrooms, was put up under conventional contracting.

It's TOO early to say how construction costs finally will compare, allowing for individual variables at the three sites.

But, as things stand now, the school's building director, Harry Stultz, said:

"If we can apply construction management to modular construction, it looks like we've got something."

Under conventional contracting, one contractor of a small number of contractors win bids for a set amount of the entire construction package. The district pays the contractor and he, in turn, pays the subcontractors.

**UNDER CONSTRUCTION** management, the district and management firm agree on a total estimated maximum cost.

Each phase of construction is put out on bids to various subcontractors. Any savings realized from the estimated maximum is shared by the manager and school district.

Modular construction, without sacrificing quality or durability, has the advantage of construction speed. It, too, is let out under a single, overall contract.

Longacre, under conventional contracting, was let out at a cost of \$139,000 and breaks down to about \$21 per square foot.

Larkshire, the modular addition, is turning out at \$22.20 per square foot and \$138,400 overall. While both additions are of approximately equal size, Longacre had an advantage. Its media center was located within a courtyard which provided three ready-built walls.

Shiawassee, with 23 of its 25 subcontracts now out, appears to be going up for about \$21.70 per square foot, allowing for the district-manager split in savings.

"So far nobody has declared any dividends and we're going to wait until we're finished to declare any savings or bonuses," Stultz said, "but we're 95 per cent completed now and I'm reasonably confident we are going to see substantial savings."

**TO DATE**, costs actually generated through absolute contracts stand at approximately \$129,000, on what had been expected to be a \$223,191 job, Stultz said.

And all contracts are out except for certain items in two "catchall" contracts having to do with such things as cleaning up the area after completion of building, and certain minor changes because of fire requirements after construction began.

Under the school board's agreement with the construction manager, Matthew Lawewicz of Center Line, the first five per cent of any savings under \$223,191 will be split, with 75 per cent of the savings going to the school district and 25 per cent to the manager, as a bonus for helping save costs. Any savings in excess of five per cent will be split 50-50.

**PRESENT** indications are that the Shiawassee addition may wind up costing some \$40,000 less than estimated, with the saving being split according to the formula. Stultz praises the construction manager concept for allowing the district to maintain a closeness to contractors, for quality control as well as cost control. "It puts the construction manager on the schools' team," Stultz said, "by giving him the incentive of sharing in any savings. Sub-contractors like it because they are paid by the school district monthly on the basis of the estimated amount of their job which they have done."

Stultz has nothing but praise for the quality and durability of the modular construction at Larkshire.

"Its steel structure is welded for strength, durability and permanence," he said. "It is designed and attached to be a permanent part of the existing facility. The quality of materials on the exterior surface is an exact extension of the existing building - the same brick put on by the same installer as did the original."

The concrete base is just as good if not better than the original building's. The interior surfaces are slightly different but are the same high quality panels as were used on Harrison High. It is in absolute compliance with all code and fire requirements and the insulation is of a

quality that should provide savings in both heating and air conditioning."

The district is obliged to study the best techniques and developments in school construction, Stultz said, adding:

"If we can apply construction management to modular construction, we may be on the right track."



**DOUGLAS LIVY** has been appointed sales manager at Greene Motors, Volkswagen, in Livonia. Livy comes to Livonia after being with another dealer in Troy; he has been in the automobile business for 25 years.

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**ALMOST COMPLETE** — Tony Brown and Brian Rice, who will be attending sixth grade at Larkshire Elementary this fall, view the addition to their school which is now almost complete. (Event photo)

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