Travis Morse/Register-News

Workers with Moniger Excavating clear sod Tuesday at the site of the new proposed Mt. Vernon Township High School facility at Wells Bypass and Ambassador Road. Tuesday was the first official day of construction work at the site.

BREAKING GROUND

Earthwork begins at new MVTHS site

BY TRAVIS MORSE
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MT. VERNON — Tuesday marked the official start of construction at the site of the new proposed Mt. Vernon Township High School at Wells Bypass and Ambassador Road.

That day, crews from Moniger Excavating began the lengthy process of clearing sod from the earth at the property to prepare it for the new campus.

This work will be ongoing for quite some time, said Reed Freeman, project engineer for the McCarthy firm.

"It's just a good day for the beginning of the job to start," Freeman said.

Last week, MVTHS received 77 base construction bids for the new school project in 21 work categories. Bids had already been awarded for three additional categories, including earthwork, asphalt and ceramic tile.

And even though the new bids are still under review, district officials say the $52.3 million construction project is likely under-budget now by about $2 to $3 million.

This puts the project in a much more favorable position compared to last December, when the initial construction bids came in at more than $6 million over-budget. This prompted a major redesign and rebidding.

Superintendent Michael Smith said the start of construction Tuesday was an important turning point for the new school.

"The project has officially started," Smith said. "We've

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now started the first stages of the earthwork and we look forward to the awarding of the other contracts in the next few weeks."

MVTHS officials have scheduled the new school's official groundbreaking ceremony for 11:30 a.m. Sept. 15.

Previous reports indicated the substantial completion date for construction work will be March 24, 2016, without the theater, and May 24, 2016, with the theater.

At this point, the theater and football stadium are categorized as add-on alternates, and are not part of the base bid.

However, now that the project looks to be under-budget, MVTHS may be able to return these priority items to the base bid. It is not yet clear, though, whether this can be done.

The MVTHS Board of Education will continue discussions on the new school at the next Building Committee meeting set for 5:30 p.m. Sept. 8.

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