

MIDDLETOWN

N.J. company wins \$1M road work contract

Problems with a contractor doing millions of dollars' worth of repaving in Middletown are many but not insurmountable, the township engineer said.

**BY CHRIS ENGLISH
STAFF WRITER**

Chris English can be reached at 215-949-4193 or .

A New Jersey paving company has won another \$1 million in Middletown road work despite several complaints about communication with residents and other issues related to work it's already doing in the township.

Arawak Paving Company of Hammonton, which is working on a \$2.62 million contract to repave four Levittown sections of Middletown, was awarded a \$1,055,000 deal by the supervisors Tuesday night to repave 28 more streets in various parts of the township.

The 4-0 vote for the additional work came after a long and heated debate between township and Arawak officials over work in the Levittown sections. Despite the complaints, the supervisors said they approved the additional work for Arawak because it was the low bidder and issues with the company's Levittown work concerned mostly communication and responsiveness to direction from township officials, and not the quality of Arawak's paving.

"I've gone around and looked at their finished product and it looks like a good job," said Supervisor Jasper Caro.

"I believe they're doing a good job as far as the actual paving," added board member Chuck Thompson. "Their problem seems to be with interfacing with residents, but I got enough assurances during the meeting that these issues would be resolved, or there would be penalties if they aren't."

An Aug. 6 letter from township engineer Herb Gery to solicitor Mike Savona lists several problems.

"Arawak is behind in the 2008 Levittown project," the letter said. "It does not supply adequate equipment and manpower to the project. The equipment supplied often breaks down causing significant delays. ...The contractor has not given the required notification to residents of the construction [paving]."

Because of the letter, Savona recommended against awarding the additional work to Arawak, but the supervisors felt problems could be corrected. The next lowest bidder for the additional work was General Asphalt of Philadelphia at more than \$100,000 above Arawak's bid.

In Levittown, Arawak is repaving the Forsythia Gate, Juniper Hill, Cobalt Ridge and Quincy Hollow sections. Money for that project and the additional 28 streets is coming from a \$10 million bond issue approved by the supervisors earlier this year.

At the Tuesday meeting, Arawak operations manager Gary Giglio said the problems have been "overblown" but he would work hard to satisfy the township.

"Most of these [complaints] are unfounded," Giglio said. "We have plenty of equipment and have never failed to finish a contract on time to an owner's satisfaction."

The Levittown work probably will be finished in three or four weeks, he estimated.

Despite more harsh words for Arawak at Tuesday's meeting, Gery said the company's paving in Levittown so far was "acceptable and to the contract specifications.

Communication is certainly a problem with this particular contractor, but the problems are not insurmountable."

Giglio said he will take a more active role in making sure the company's work in Middletown goes smoother.

"In the end, what we owe you is a good job on time, and that is what you will get," he said.

"That statement concerns me," Thompson responded after the meeting. "They are paving residential streets and they need to understand that in addition to a good job on time, they also

need to respect the needs and wishes of the residents we represent.”