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Tuxedo Court project still within budget with streamlined construction schedule, housing officials say

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Changing the construction plans at Ensley's Tuxedo Court will keep the mixed-income project within budget, housing officials said.

Birmingham Housing Authority commissioners on Monday approved a \$21 million contract with Capstone Building Corp. to construct Tuxedo Court's 306 homes and apartments in one phase.

The new construction deal will keep the project within its original budget, housing officials said.

Initially, the housing authority planned to build Tuxedo Court in two phases. The work would have cost almost \$31 million and pushed the project past its original budget. The housing authority would have had to seek additional money if the construction remained in phases.

Doing the project in one phase will keep the project's estimated total cost between \$53 million and \$56 million, including street improvements, demolition, and building new daycare and community centers, said executive director Ralph Ruggs.

"We're looking at it as a cost savings," Ruggs said.

Tuxedo Court is still on pace to meet an October 2009 deadline to spend a \$20 million Hope VI grant, said James Brooks, president of the Boulevard Group project management team.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the housing authority the grant in 2004 and is requiring housing authorities around the nation to spend such grants in five years.

Ruggs said he envisions the first residents moving into Tuxedo Court by September 2009.

Housing commissioners also approved an additional \$288,570 to Engineering Design Technologies Inc. to provide site engineering construction services at Tuxedo Court.

In other matters, Charles E. Townsend was sworn in as the newest public housing commissioner. Townsend, a former principal at Jackson-Olin High School, replaces Arthur Welch, whose term ended earlier this month.

Townsend is Mayor Larry Langford's first appointment to the housing board.

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