

Work crews dig in at site of civic center

By Yvonne C.T. Vassel

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — Work on the new civic center began Monday morning, a few minutes after the mayor and city commissioners broke ground for the project.

Curtis-Hale Inc. is in charge of construction. Keith Field, the general contractor's vice president, said it will take two weeks to clear the site, remove about 10 feet of buried garbage and fill and grade it.

Construction is expected to be finished within nine months. The city had promised Winter Park Memorial Hospital — which bought the current civic center at 2005 Mizell Ave. for \$767,000 — that it would vacate the building by December. Hospital administrator Willard Wisler said on Monday the hospital was open to any city request for an extension.

The 9 a.m. ground-breaking ceremony at the Morse Boulevard and Harper

Please see **CENTER, 2**



GEORGE REMAINE/SENTINEL

Mayor Hope Strong Jr. ready to dig
... he talks to visitors at center site.

CENTER

From 1

Street site was attended by city officials, members of the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce and residents who formed a group to raise money for the center.

At a meeting earlier that morning the commission voted to spend another \$49,700 to build an entry portico and terrace on the center. The money will be taken from \$800,000 the city has in reserve to buy the Winter Park Golf Course, if it is offered for sale.

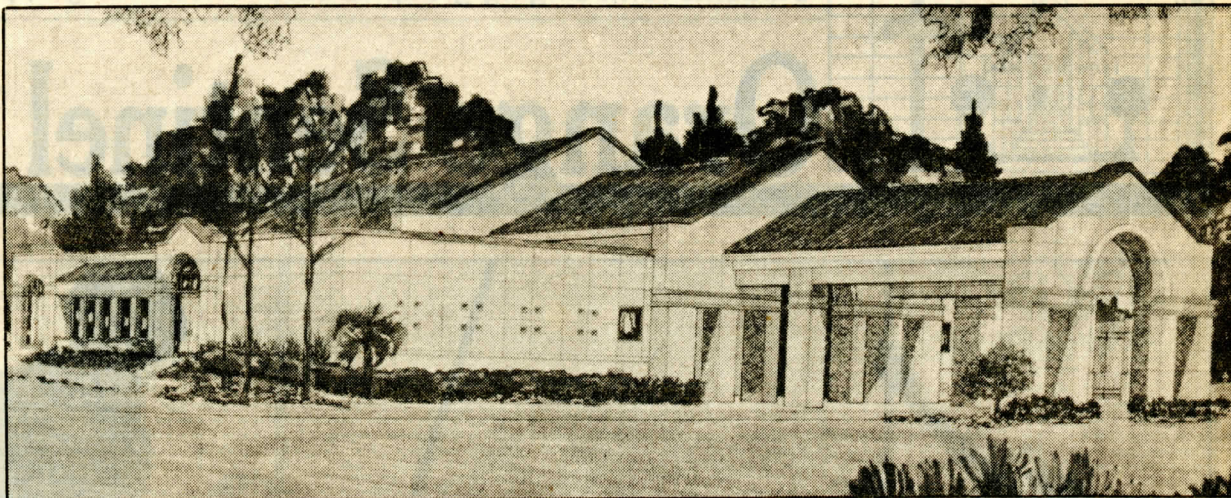
The portico and terrace were not included in the original \$1,072,290 construction contract.

Last week Field asked the city commission to decide whether to include the terrace and portico before construction started. It would cost the city more to add the two later and delay completion of the project, he said.

Commissioner Gary Brewer asked to delay the decision until he had met with a group of residents and business people to see if they would start a fund-raiser for the center.

On Monday Kenneth Murrah, a resident, said the group aims to raise at least \$100,000. That money will be used to decorate and furnish the center, but not for construction costs. The money allocated by the city does not include the cost of decorating.

Rachel Murrah, another member of the group, said residents raised money for a youth center that later



Commissioners voted Monday to spend \$49,700 on an entry portico and terrace.

became the civic center on Mizell Avenue.

Commissioner Tom Ivey spoke against the city spending more money on the project and said whatever the group raised should be used to build the portico and terrace.

Commissioner David Johnston, who had voted in the past against spending the more than \$1 million for the project, supported the additional expense.

"I've opposed the civic center cost," said Johnston. "However, I think the construction of the center would not be in the best interest of the city with-

out the terrace and portico and so I will vote for this motion reluctantly."

"I think it will be a great success," Mrs. Murrah said of the fund-raising campaign. "When you look at a lot of buildings in Winter Park, such as the library and the civic center, all of them have been helped by small groups of individuals. We're doing it again."

Sara Howden said the group plans to hire an interior designer for the center.