

Chapter 49
PURCHASING

GENERAL REFERENCES

Administration of government — See Ch. 3.

§ 49-1. Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the taxpayers of Kent County with an economical and efficient method of public purchasing. The chapter will promote maximum competition without compromising quality; provide fairness in selection of vendors; assure quality goods and services at the best price; and provide clear, accurate and uniform information on goods, services or construction to be purchased. This will be accomplished by implementing standardized regulations and procedures under a uniform purchasing system.

§ 49-2. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

ADDENDUM — A written change to an invitation to bid.

ALTERNATE BID — A dollar amount to be added to or subtracted from the base bid price. The Director of Purchasing may request alternate bid prices in order to compare various options that may be in the County's best interest.

APPLICABLE LAW — Any federal, state, or local law, ordinance, statute, regulation, rule or procedure, as any of the same may be applicable to a specific subject, matter, or item, in the order of priority relevant or applicable to such matter, as the same shall from time to time be in force or effect.

AWARD — A determination, after review, that a certain vendor will be given the contract.

BID — A price submitted by a bidder for a product, service, or construction.

BID BOND — A money guaranty, executed by a surety company authorized to do business in this state, or the equivalent in cash, cashier's check, letter of credit, certified funds, or other security satisfactory to the Director of Purchasing, in such amount as he/she shall deem adequate for the protection of the County, submitted by a bidder, payable to, or issued to the benefit of, the County Commissioners, to guaranty that the bidder shall contract to fulfill the terms of his bid.

BIDDER — Any person who submits a quote, proposal or bid.

BID INVITATION — A packet of material or information provided to prospective bidders through an invitation to bid, request for proposal, or other means containing the material terms and specifications.

BLANKET PURCHASE ORDER — An open purchase order effective for a stated period of time and not to exceed stated dollar limits to which miscellaneous individual similar purchases can be charged.

CONDITIONAL BID — A bid submitted by a bidder on which the bidder has made certain conditions for acceptance that are contrary to the conditions of the ITB or that were not requested in the ITB.

CONTRACT — A written agreement covering the purchasing or furnishing of a product, a service, or construction.

CONTRACTOR — Any person who has a contract with the County.

COUNTY — Kent County, Maryland.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR — The Chief Administrative Officer for Kent County, appointed by the County Commissioners and described in Chapter 3, § 3-13 of the Kent County Code.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS — The County Commissioners of Kent County, Maryland.

COUNTY ENGINEER — The individual appointed by the County Commissioners to serve as the County Engineer.

DEPARTMENT — Any functional division of the Kent County Government; any state agency subject to local procurement processes pursuant to § 8-101 of Article 24 (§ 16-106 of the Local Government Article) of the Annotated Code of Maryland; and the Kent County Health Department to the extent that department avails itself of County purchasing system under the authority of § 12-109 of the State Finance and Procurement Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

DEPARTMENT HEAD — The employee who is in charge of a department.

DIRECTOR OF PURCHASING — The individual designated pursuant to this chapter as being generally responsible for the day-to-day purchasing and procurement functions of the County.

EMERGENCY — A sudden and unexpected occurrence or condition which the County Commissioners or a department head reasonably could not foresee, posing an actual and immediate threat to the continuance of an essential normal operation of a department or the need to cope with a public exigent condition.

FORCE MAJEURE — Events or conditions including, but not limited to, government restriction, strike, flood, fire, or unforeseen catastrophe, beyond a person's control.

FORMAL BID — A sealed bid for goods, services, or construction exceeding \$25,000.

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS — The terms and conditions, in addition to applicable law, set by the Director of Purchasing as approved by the County Attorney, applicable to all purchases and contracts on behalf of the county.

IN-COUNTY BIDDER — A bidder whose principal place of business is located in Kent County, Maryland.

INVITATION TO BID OR REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL — A document or collection of documents or materials constituting a solicitation or request for proposals or bids. In certain contexts, the terms may be used interchangeably.

ITB OR RFP — An invitation to bids or a request for proposal. In certain contexts, the terms may be used interchangeably.

KENT COUNTY GOVERNMENT — The County Commissioners of Kent County, Maryland, and all departments under their authority.

LOCAL TIME — Eastern standard time or Eastern daylight saving time, as the case may be.

LOWEST RESPONSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE BIDDER — The responsible and responsive bidder who has submitted the lowest price.

MATERIALS — Materials, equipment, tools, supplies, or any other items of personal property, excluding real property and electric, gas, water, telephone, or similar utilities.

MINOR IRREGULARITY — An irregularity in bid or proposal that is merely a matter of form and not of substance or pertains to some immaterial or inconsequential defect or variation of a bid or proposal from the exact requirement of the solicitation, the correction or waiver of which would not be prejudicial to the other bidders or to the purchasing or using department.

OUT-OF-COUNTY BIDDER — A bidder whose principal place of business is not located in Kent County, Maryland.

PAYMENT BOND — A money guaranty submitted by a successful bidder and made payable to, or issued to the benefit of, the County Commissioners, executed by a surety company authorized to do business in this state, or the equivalent in cash, cashier's check, letter of credit, certified funds, or other security satisfactory to the Director of Purchasing and the County Attorney for the protection of all persons supplying labor and materials, including lessors of equipment to the extent of the fair rental value thereof, to the contractor or his subcontractor in the prosecution of the work provided for in the contract for the use of each such person. Any contractor, prior to receiving a progress or final payment under a contract covered hereunder, shall certify, in writing, that he has made payment from proceeds of prior payments and that he will make timely payments from the proceeds of the progress or final payment then due him to his subcontractors and suppliers in accordance with his contractual arrangements with them.

PERFORMANCE BOND — A money guaranty, executed by a surety company authorized to do business in this state, or the equivalent in cash, cashier's check, letter of credit, certified funds, or other security satisfactory to the Director of Purchasing and the County Attorney in such amount as deemed adequate for the protection of the County, submitted by the successful bidder and made payable to or issued to the benefit of the County Commissioners, which guaranties that the successful bidder will execute the terms of the contract with the County Commissioners.

PERSON — An individual, corporation, partnership of any kind, limited-liability company of any kind, trust, unincorporated association, unincorporated business, or any other form of business or entity of any kind, whether or not recognized under the laws of the State of Maryland.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES — Services which generally require specialized education, training, or knowledge and involve intellectual skills including, but not limited to, engineering, environmental engineering, environmental monitoring, geology, architecture, archaeology, architectural historians, historians, educational consulting, management, medicine, teaching, finance, accounting, auditing, and construction management.

PROPOSAL — The written submission of a firm price other than by sealed bid.

PURCHASING AGENT — Any individual designated a purchasing agent pursuant to this chapter.

PURCHASING CARD — A credit card, debit card, or other similar authority enabling a purchasing agent, department head, or other authorized individual to purchase materials, supplies, or services on and for the County's account, as provided for in this chapter.

QUOTE — The oral submission of a price.

RESPONSIBLE — Meeting or appearing to meet all required qualifications of an ITB or RFP, and being or appearing to be capable of carrying out the terms of the contract.

RESPONSIVE — Having submitted all specifications, documents, information and other material required pursuant to an ITB or RFP, and is capable of carrying out the terms of the contract.

SEALED BID — The confidential submission of a price that will be opened and read aloud at an announced date and time, at which bidders and the general public may attend.

TIE BID — Responsive bids from responsible bidders that are identical in price, terms and conditions and which meet all the requirements and evaluation criteria set forth in an ITB or RFP.

VENDOR — A supplier of goods, services or construction.

§ 49-3. General matters.

- A. Authority. Pursuant to the laws of the State of Maryland and pertinent public local law, the County Commissioners hereby enact this chapter.
- B. Applicability of provisions. All departments and the employees of all of them shall comply with and be subject to the provisions of this chapter and any subsequent rules and regulations adopted by resolution by the County Commissioners, or with other procedures approved by the County Commissioners, for the purchase or contract of goods, services or construction.
- C. Compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations required. Wherever applicable, all requirements set forth in state and federal grant, loan, and assistance programs and contracts shall be satisfied. The requirement that provides the greater restriction or highest standards shall prevail.
- D. Appropriation and certification of funds. The County Commissioners, through the County's annual budget process, appropriate funds for all purchases except for the purchases of the Kent County Health Department. The Director of Purchasing, or the appropriate department head, as the case may be, will certify that funds have been appropriated before purchases are authorized. The Director of Purchasing shall, however, have no responsibility to certify that funds have been appropriated for the purchases of the Kent County Health Department.

§ 49-4. Department of Purchasing created; Director of Purchasing established; County Administrator designated as Director of Purchasing; powers and duties.

- A. Department established. There is a Department of Purchasing established in the governmental structure of Kent County, which Department shall be directed by a Director of Purchasing who shall serve at the discretion of the County Commissioners and shall be an at-will employee and a department head in accordance with the Personnel Rules and Regulations of Kent County as from time to time in place. The Department shall have such responsibilities, budget, employees, and duties as the County Commissioners shall from time to time determine. The Department shall be responsible generally for the purchasing and procurement functions of the County. Until such time as the County Commissioners shall provide for the organizational structure, positions, and budget separately, the functions and structure of the Department of Purchasing shall be subsumed within and be a part of the functions of the County Administrator.
- B. The Director of Purchasing shall have the following duties:

- (1) Implement or supervise the implementation of the provisions of this chapter and any subsequent regulations for the purpose of purchasing or contracting for goods, services or construction.
 - (2) Ensure that products or services are provided according to the contract terms.
 - (3) Supervise the bid process.
 - (4) Maintain inventory control of County property and assets.
 - (5) Prescribe and maintain such forms as are reasonably necessary to the operation of this chapter.
 - (6) Prepare and maintain a vendors catalog file.
 - (7) Declare a vendor or person who defaults on his/her quotations, contracts, or obligations, or which otherwise has a record of poor or untimely performance, as a "not responsible bidder" and disqualify or debar such vendors or persons from receiving any business from the County for up to five years.
 - (8) Determine if prequalification of bidders is appropriate and set forth the criteria for prequalification.
 - (9) Give periodic post-purchase public notice of purchases which exceed \$25,000, or as otherwise may be required by law. Such notice may be accomplished by posting on the County's Internet website, posting at the location of the County Commissioners offices on a public bulletin or notice board, or by any other means consistently employed by the County to advise County residents of County Commissioner meeting agendas.
 - (10) Prepare specifications for goods, services and construction.
 - (11) Schedule and hold prebid conferences.
 - (12) Prepare and distribute addendums to ITBs.
 - (13) Ensure that all necessary documentation is maintained.
 - (14) Prepare and maintain a purchasing manual to include a copy of this chapter, adopted forms, laws, regulations, and other appropriate material.
- C. The Director of Purchasing may delegate part or all of his powers and duties to designated purchasing agents or other County employees pursuant to this chapter.

§ 49-5. General regulations and procedures.

The regulations and procedures included in this section shall control all purchases made with public funds, except as otherwise permitted or directed under §§ 49-6 and 49-7 of this chapter.

A. Unauthorized purchases.

- (1) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, it shall be unlawful for any County official or employee to purchase, contract for, or order goods, services, or construction for which funds have not been appropriated by the County Commissioners.

- (2) Liability for an unauthorized purchase may be assumed by the County Commissioners upon a finding by them, on the record, that:
 - (a) The purchaser made the purchase in the good faith belief that it was authorized.
 - (b) The goods or services purchased are of use and value to the County.
- B. Nonappropriation. Anything in this chapter to the contrary notwithstanding, no contract for goods or services shall be entered into by or on behalf of the County, the payment obligations of which contract extend beyond the fiscal year in which the contract is executed, unless the contract contains a nonappropriations clause allowing the County to terminate the contract if sufficient funds for that contract are not legally appropriated by the County.
- C. Governing law. All contracts for goods or services entered into by or on behalf of the County shall be subject to and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland, without regards to its conflicts of laws principles. Jurisdiction and venue shall lie only in state or federal courts located in the geographic limits of the State of Maryland.
- D. Mistakes in purchasing. Mistakes made by County officials or employees during the purchasing process which do not substantially affect the purchase, but which are contrary to the provisions of this chapter may be waived by the County Commissioners at their discretion. Mistakes shall not include unauthorized purchases.
- E. Purchasing authorizations, amounts and conditions limited. The following County employees are authorized to encumber or commit public funds in the amounts and under the conditions stated:
 - (1) Department head. Subject to any limitations contained in any purchasing authorizations resolution as may be from time to time in force and effect, a department head may authorize purchases not to exceed \$5,000 for any single service, item or group of similar items purchased. The department head, with approval of the Director of Purchasing, may delegate authority, not to exceed \$2,500, to subordinates for any single service, item or group of similar items purchased. The department head shall provide the Director of Purchasing with a list of personnel who have been delegated the authorization to make purchases and the maximum amount delegated.
 - (2) Director of Purchasing or designee. The Director of Purchasing or his designee may authorize all purchases not to exceed \$25,000. Delegation of purchasing approval by the Director of Purchasing shall not relieve the Director of Purchasing for responsibility therefor.
 - (3) County Commissioners. The County Commissioners must approve all purchases exceeding \$25,000 but may delegate special authority to the Director of Purchasing to make a specific purchase which exceeds \$25,000.
 - (4) The County Commissioners, the Director of Purchasing, purchasing agents and the department heads and authorized designees are the only individuals possessing legally binding purchasing authority, except as otherwise provided herein.
 - (5) Non-County departments. Non-County departments utilizing County procurement processes will otherwise follow their customary authorization procedures governing when and from whom approval is required for the commitment of funds.

F. Bid regulations and procedures.

(1) Competitive bids.

(a) General requirements. All purchases of and contracts for supplies and services and all sales of personal property which have become obsolete and unusable, except as specifically provided herein, shall be based, whenever possible, on competitive bids.

(b) Determination of bid procedure.

[1] Purchases exceeding \$500 for a single item or exceeding in the aggregate \$1,500 for multiple items (none of which exceeds single-item cost of \$500) but, in either case, not exceeding \$5,000 will require at least three informal price quotes, usually by telephone, to ensure that the most responsive purchase is made and at the best price, which is also in the best interest of the County. These may require written confirmation. The quotes, not merely the accepted quote, must be recorded by County personnel obtaining the quote and attached to the payment request for the items purchased.

[2] For purchases exceeding \$5,000 but not exceeding \$15,000, at least three price quotes shall be obtained in writing from bidders or vendors and must be maintained by the recipient and attached to the payment request for the items purchased. Written price quotes shall be submitted to the Director of Purchasing for processing and approval.

[3] For purchases exceeding \$15,000 but not exceeding \$25,000, prices will be obtained by written proposals, submitted directly to the Director of Purchasing; however, the County Commissioners reserve the right to require sealed bids. After review, the Director of Purchasing will record the proposals and take appropriate action in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

[4] Purchases over \$25,000 shall be by sealed formal bids submitted to the Director of Purchasing and securely held until the time of bid opening. Bids will be opened and read aloud in an open public meeting as stated in the ITB or RFP. At the time of bid opening, the Director of Purchasing will record the bids.

[5] The Director of Purchasing shall be responsible for approving the date, time, and location of, and any process relating to, the opening of written proposals and sealed formal bids submitted pursuant to Subsection F(1)(b)[3] and [4] above, and shall otherwise determine or approve the process relating thereto.

[6] Unless there is no in-County person providing the goods, services, or construction sought, at least one quote, proposal, or bid, as the case may be, shall be solicited from an in-County person.

(2) Bid bonds. The Director of Purchasing may, at his discretion, require bid bonds for proposals and bids.

- (a) Form. Bid bonds may be in the form of cash, cashier's check, certified check, letter of credit, or other approved bond form executed by an approved surety company in an amount set by the Director of Purchasing and in a form acceptable to the Director of Purchasing. The Director of Purchasing has the right to reject any bid that does not comply with this section.
 - (b) Return of bonds. Bid bonds will be returned to all bidders upon execution of the contract by the successful bidder or as deemed appropriate by the Director of Purchasing.
- (3) Performance and payment bonds. The Director of Purchasing, at his discretion, may require performance and payment bonds.
- (a) Form. Performance and payment bonds will be in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check, letter of credit, or approved bond forms, other security acceptable to the Director of Purchasing executed by an approved surety company.
 - (b) Amount of bond. Whenever a performance or payment bond is required, the amount of the bond shall be determined by the Director of Purchasing but shall be not less than 100% of the bid price.
- (4) Modification or withdrawal of bids.
- (a) Procedure. Bids may be modified or withdrawn by written notice received by the Director of Purchasing before the time and date set for bid opening.
 - (b) Disposition of bid bond. If a bid is withdrawn in accordance with this regulation, the bid bond, if any, shall be returned to the bidder.
- (5) Late bids, withdrawals and modifications.
- (a) Policy. Any bid, request for withdrawal, or request for modification received at the place designated in the invitation to bid after the time and date set for receipt and opening of bids is late.
 - (b) Consideration. A late bid may not be considered under any circumstances and will be returned to the bidder unopened, by certified mail, to the bidder's last known address. Late modifications and late withdrawals may be considered by the County Commissioners and allowed if in the best interest of the County.
- (6) Mistake in bids.
- (a) Criteria for correction or withdrawal. If a mistake is alleged by a bidder, the Director of Purchasing may allow correction or withdrawal in accordance with the following criteria:
 - [1] If both the mistake and the intended correct provision are evident, correction, but not withdrawal, may be allowed.
 - [2] If the mistake, but not the intended correct provision, is evident, then withdrawal may be allowed, but correction may be allowed only if:
 - [a] The correction is the most favorable to the County.

- [b] The bidder demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that the proposed correction was the intended provision.
 - [c] Correction is deemed by the County Commissioners or the Director of Purchasing, as applicable, to be in the best interest of the County.
 - [d] The County Attorney renders an opinion that a decision to allow correction would more likely than not be upheld upon court challenge.
- (b) Correction after award. Mistakes may not be corrected after award of the contract, and changes in price are not permitted unless the Director of Purchasing determines it would be in the best interest of the County.
- (c) Written report required. When a bid is corrected or withdrawn or correction or withdrawal is denied, the Director of Purchasing shall prepare a written report showing all actions taken in accordance with this chapter.
- (7) Evaluation and award.
- (a) General policy. The contract will be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder whose bid meets the following requirements and such other requirements as may be set forth in the invitation to bid and/or other solicitation materials:
- [1] The ability, capacity, organization, facilities and skill of the bidder to perform the contract or provide the service required.
 - [2] The ability of the bidder to perform the contract or provide the service promptly or within the time specified without delay or interference.
 - [3] The character, integrity, reputation, judgment, experience, and efficiency of the bidder.
 - [4] The bidder's quality of performance of previous contracts or services.
 - [5] The bidder's previous and current compliance with laws and ordinances relating to the type of contract or service.
 - [6] Whether the bidder is in arrears to the County on any debt or contract.
 - [7] Whether the bidder is in default on any surety to the County.
 - [8] Whether the bidder is delinquent as to any taxes or assessments.
 - [9] The sufficiency of the financial resources and ability of the bidder to perform the contract or provide the service.
 - [10] The quality, availability, and adaptability of the supplies or contractual services to the particular use required.
 - [11] The ability of the bidder to provide future maintenance and service for the use of the subject of the contract.
 - [12] Any other information relevant to the decision to award the contract.

- [13] Whether the bidder has been debarred by another governmental jurisdiction, the State of Maryland, or the United States. Debarment within three years prior to a bid opening or other selection of a vendor or contractor shall automatically eliminate the debarred person. Debarments more than three years prior may render the person ineligible, based upon the determination of the Director of Purchasing on the advice of the County Attorney.
- (b) Determination of lowest bid; additional restrictions.
- [1] Bids shall be evaluated to determine which responsible and responsive bidder offers the lowest cost to the County in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth in § 49-5F(7)(a)[1] through [13] above. The County Commissioners reserve the right to make the award in a manner deemed to be in the best interest of the County.
- [2] Nothing in this chapter shall be deemed to permit an award to a bidder submitting a higher quality item than that designated in the invitation to bid if that bidder is not also the lowest bidder.
- (c) Award. Upon determination of the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, the Director of Purchasing may award the contract to that bidder in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.
- (d) In-County bidder's preference on motor vehicles and heavy equipment. The County Commissioners reserve the right to show preference to local bidders in the purchase, lease, or lease-purchase of motor vehicles and heavy equipment. The amount of preference shall not exceed 2% of the amount bid. Any in-County bidder in default on payment of any County or state tax shall not be eligible to receive preference until all taxes due are paid. The County Commissioners must, by formal motion, approve any preference at the time solicitation of bids is approved. Notice of preference availability must be included in the invitation to bid and in all advertisements.
- (8) Tie bids. In the instance of low tie bids from otherwise responsive responsible bidders, where all other factors are equal, the award shall be made to the in-County bidder if identical bids are received from an in-County bidder and an out-of-County bidder. If identical low bids are received from in-County bidders only or from out-of-County bidders only, a drawing by lots or straws shall be conducted. The Director of Purchasing and the Clerk to the County Commissioners shall be present at the drawing. Bidders will be invited. The results shall be recorded on the bid tabulation sheet by the Director of Purchasing.
- (9) Single bids. If only one bid from a responsive responsible bidder is received in response to an ITB, an award may be made to the such bidder in accordance with the provisions of this chapter if the price submitted is fair and reasonable and other prospective bidders had reasonable opportunity to respond; otherwise, the bid may be rejected and new bids may be solicited or the proposed purchase may be canceled or, if the Director of Purchasing determines, in writing, that the need for the supply or service continues but that the price of the one bid is not fair and reasonable and there is not time for resolicitation or resolicitation would likely be futile, the purchase may then be conducted under § 49-6C of this chapter.

- (10) Alternate and conditional bids. Alternate and conditional bids unless specifically authorized in the ITB shall not be considered.
 - (11) Rejection of ITBs and RFPs. Any bid or proposal may be rejected when it is deemed by the County Commissioners, in their sole discretion, to be in the best interest of the County to do so. Reasons for rejection may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - (a) The vendor that submitted the bid or proposal is not a responsible bidder.
 - (b) The bid or proposal does not conform to the requirements of the solicitation.
 - (c) Unreasonable price.
 - (d) The bidder is debarred or ineligible.
 - (e) Any factor described in § 49-5F(7)(a)[1] through [13].
 - (f) Any other factor deemed justifiable by the County Commissioners for the benefit or protection of the County.
 - (12) Rejection of bids. The County Commissioners reserve the right to reject any or all bids as deemed appropriate in their sole discretion and as may be in the best interest of the County.
 - (13) The Director of Purchasing may waive a minor irregularity in a bid or proposal if in the best interest of the County.
- G. Blanket purchase orders.
- (1) Purpose. The purpose of a blanket purchase order is to provide a department with a simplified means of purchasing miscellaneous incidental items which are similar in nature.
 - (2) Criteria. The following criteria shall be followed:
 - (a) The blanket purchase order must be authorized and signed by the Director of Purchasing.
 - (b) The total amount purchased on an individual purchase order shall not exceed \$1,000.
 - (c) The total cost of any single item purchased shall not exceed \$250.
 - (d) The blanket purchase order shall be issued for a period not to exceed the lesser of one year or the period of time for which blanket purchase order pricing has been contracted for by the County.
- H. Gifts and rebates. The Director of Purchasing, purchasing agents, department heads, and every official and employee of the County are expressly prohibited from accepting, directly or indirectly, from any person to which any purchase or contract is or might be awarded any rebate, gift, money or anything of value whatsoever, except where given for the use or benefit of the County, or except as otherwise allowed under the County's Code of Ethics as embodied in Chapter 29 of this Code.

- I. Prohibition against subdivision. No contract or purchase shall be subdivided to avoid the requirements of this chapter.
- J. Cooperative purchases. The Director of Purchasing shall have the authority to enter into contracts on behalf of the County with other units of government, including, but not limited to, the State of Maryland, other Maryland counties and municipalities, and neighboring jurisdictions in states surrounding Maryland in cooperative purchasing plans when the best interests of the County would be served thereby. This authority includes the authority to purchase from suppliers or contractors on the same terms and conditions as contracts already entered into by such jurisdictions whether or not such contracts have specifically provided for such cooperative or extended purchasing. In all such instances of cooperative purchasing, the Director of Purchasing shall establish to his reasonable satisfaction, after consultation with the County Attorney, that the award of such contracts and the process employed therein is reasonably approximate to that usually employed by the County or otherwise has appropriate indicia of competitiveness and opportunity to bid or participate.
- K. Inspection and testing. The Director of Purchasing shall provide for the inspection of all deliveries of supplies or contractual services to determine their conformance with the specifications set forth in the order or contract. Such inspection may be performed by the Director of Purchasing, purchasing agents, department heads, or individuals to whom such duties may be delegated.
- L. Unless otherwise directed by the Director of Purchasing, all material relevant to purchase made pursuant to this chapter shall be maintained by the Department at whose direction or upon whose behalf a contract for goods or services is made. Notwithstanding the foregoing, all documentation required to be submitted to the Director of Purchasing or to the Director of Finance shall be so submitted with originals or copies, as the case may be, to be retained by such department, including, but not limited to, titles, registrations, warranties, and instructional and operating manuals. Wherever possible, such materials shall be referenced to the applicable item or service and the contract relating thereto.
- M. Bid protests. Any unsuccessful bidder may file a protest of any competitively bid procurement under this chapter by filing a written protest to the Director of Purchasing as outlined in this § 49-5M.
 - (1) The written protest shall be delivered to the County at its current primary administrative office, addressed to the Director of Purchasing, not later the seven days from the determination by the appropriate County officer or employee of the award being protested. "Delivered to" shall mean the actual receipt in the County's then-current primary administrative office.
 - (2) The written protest must include:
 - (a) The name, address, and telephone number of the protester;
 - (b) An identification of the solicitation or contract concerning which the protest concerns, including the bid, RFP, solicitation, or other identifying number;
 - (c) A detailed statement of the legal and factual grounds supporting the protest, including copies of relevant documents; and
 - (d) A statement as to the relief requested.

- (3) The County will initiate an investigation and issue a written determination in a timely manner within 10 days of receipt of the protest. In the County's discretion, an informal hearing may be conducted by the Director of Purchasing or her designee prior to the determination. Unless exigent circumstances exist, as determined by the Director of Purchasing, no award may be made if there is a timely submitted, unresolved outstanding protest.

§ 49-6. Emergency purchases.

- A. Purpose. This section is established for the purchase of supplies, materials, services, maintenance and/or construction when normal purchase procedures cannot be used because of an emergency.
- B. Scope. Only those purchases necessary to meet the emergency are allowed under this section. Section 49-6 of this chapter shall not apply to the Kent County Health Department, which will follow its customary procedure for the authorization of purchases in an emergency situation.
- C. Types of emergencies. Emergencies will fall into one of the following categories:
 - (1) Immediate emergency: an emergency requiring an immediate response.
 - (2) Nonimmediate emergency: an emergency requiring a prompt response but which response can be delayed until the next scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners.
- D. Procedures.
 - (1) Declaration of emergency. The department head of the department, having general jurisdiction with respect to the particular emergency, or next senior employee below the department head, shall contact the first available individual listed below, in the order listed below, to report the emergency and describe the nature, extent, and expense of the emergency purchasing required, and obtain a declaration of emergency:
 - (a) County Commissioner(s).
 - (b) County Administrator.
 - (c) Director of Purchasing.
 - (d) County Attorney.
 - (2) Written reports.
 - (a) Immediate emergency.
 - [1] As soon as possible, but not later than five working days, the department head will submit a full written report to the Director of Purchasing, giving the following information:
 - [a] Department.
 - [b] Details of the emergency.

- [c] Why written approval could not be obtained and why standard purchase procedures could not be followed.
 - [d] Cost.
 - [e] Vendor(s).
 - [f] Department head signature.
- [2] At all times, standard purchase procedures shall be followed as nearly as possible in order to establish full record of the purchase.
- (b) Nonimmediate emergency.
- [1] The department head will submit a written request to the Director of Purchasing, giving the following minimum information:
- [a] Date.
 - [b] Department.
 - [c] Description of the emergency and why standard purchase procedures cannot be followed.
 - [d] Estimated cost.
 - [e] Preferred vendor(s).
 - [f] Department head signature.
- [2] The Director of Purchasing will review the request and, if time permits, follow normal procedures as provided in this chapter. If normal procedures cannot be followed, the Director of Purchasing may authorize the purchase.

§ 49-7. Special purchases.

- A. Professional services purchases.
- (1) Scope. Services provided by physicians, auditors, attorneys, architects, engineers, consultants or other individuals or organizations possessing a high degree of technical skill are considered to be professional services, and are generally subject to the standard competitive bidding procedures of this chapter.
 - (2) Selection. Selection will be made in accordance with criteria set forth in the request for proposal or with other criteria deemed appropriate by the County Commissioners.
- B. Construction purchases. Construction purchases shall include capital improvement projects where the cost exceeds \$15,000 for construction or reconstruction, in whole or in part, of County-owned properties or facilities. The requesting department head shall be responsible for providing a requisition and written explanation of the necessity for the construction. The requisition will then be processed under the appropriate provisions of this chapter.
- C. Sole-source purchases. A contract may be awarded for material or nonprofessional services without competition if the County Commissioners, prior to the procurement, determines

in writing that there is only one source for the required material or service. Sole-source procurement shall not be used unless there is sufficient evidence that there is only one source for the required material or service and that no other type or material or service, or source of service, will satisfy the requirements of the County. In making such determinations, the County Commissioners may consider issues of operational, system, hardware, and/or software compatibility. Any department or agency seeking approval of a sole-source procurement shall submit written documentation to the County Commissioners stating the grounds for the sole-source request. Such documentation shall include a statement of the specific efforts made in determining or identifying sources for the material or service and an explanation of the need for the procurement. A written determination by the County Commissioners of the need for a sole-source procurement shall remain in the County's contract files and in the records of the County Commissioners.

- D. Service and repair contracts. The nature of ongoing and/or "on-call" service and repair contracts makes it very impractical to solicit prices by invitation to bid. Therefore, the Director of Purchasing may request proposals rather than follow the formal sealed bid process, although every effort should be made to follow the other appropriate provisions of this chapter. The Director of Purchasing may consider ongoing vendor relationships in the selection process, as well as other appropriate criteria to justify the final selection.
- E. Services set by law. Services for which the rate or price is fixed by a public authority authorized by law to fix rates or prices shall be purchased without competitive bidding.
- F. Lease purchases.
 - (1) Real property. Because of the nature of limited availability of real property, leases for real property shall be made through direct negotiation by the Director of Purchasing and are not otherwise subject to the provisions of this chapter. All leases for real property must be approved by the County Commissioners.
 - (2) Personal property. Personal property may be acquired through lease-purchase agreements. However, this subsection in no way is intended to abridge the purchasing regulations set forth in this chapter.
 - (3) Purchase options. A purchase option in a lease, excluding a lease for real property, may be exercised only if the lease containing the purchase option was awarded under competitive bidding procedures or the lease supply or facility is the only supply or facility that can meet the County's requirements.

§ 49-8. Preparation and approval of additional regulatory procedures.

The Director of Purchasing will prepare additional policies or regulations to further amplify the provisions of this chapter and submit them to the County Commissioners for approval by resolution. Approved regulations and other explanatory or procedural material shall be included in the purchasing manual.

§ 49-9. Purchasing cards.

- A. The Director of Purchasing, upon approval of the County Commissioners, may establish or continue a plan or program for the use of purchasing cards to facilitate the purchase of goods and services by authorized individuals on behalf of the County.

- B. Any purchasing card plan or program shall provide for:
- (1) The specific positions or categories of positions which may utilize purchasing cards.
 - (2) The spending limits for purchasing cards by categories or positions.
 - (3) Restrictions on the nature or type of purchases which may be made, restrictions as to particular vendors or categories of vendors from whom goods or services may be purchased, and other such restrictions as the Director of Purchasing shall determine.
 - (4) Provisions for the periodic review and assessment of purchasing card performance including any required or recommended auditing standards or processes.
 - (5) Other criteria as may be from time to time determined by the Director of Purchasing or required by the County Commissioners.
- C. In no event shall the purchasing card plan or program or the use of purchasing cards be used to circumvent the spending limits and other restrictions contained in this chapter.
- D. The Director of Purchasing may provide for the selection of the purchasing card provider by competitive bid, request for qualifications, negotiated contract, or other means upon the approval of the County Commissioners.

§ 49-10. Debarment process.

- A. Any County employee may propose that a vendor be debarred from doing business with the County based upon the poor quality of goods or services provided, the timeliness of providing such goods or services, the breach of any warranty or contract term or condition relating to the supplying of such goods or services, or any other matter or reason deemed sufficient by the employee to warrant such action.
- B. The employee shall refer such proposal to the employee's department head, who shall review the allegation, claims, circumstances, and documentation prepared or provided by the employee and determine whether to forward such proposal to the Director of Purchasing.
- C. If the department head shall determine that the proposal should be considered further, the department head shall forward the proposal and all pertinent documentation to the Director of Purchasing, who shall review the material with the department head and, in the Director of Purchasing's discretion, the employee and/or others deemed appropriate, determine whether the matter should be further pursued.
- D. If the Director of Purchasing shall determine that the matter should be further pursued, the Director of Purchasing shall notify the vendor by first-class mail, postage prepaid, that there has been a proposal to debar the vendor from doing business with the County, and provide the vendor an opportunity to be heard (a "hearing") by the Director of Purchasing and to address the facts and circumstances regarding the matter.
- E. Any hearing held pursuant hereto shall be informal, shall not be subject to formal rules of evidence or procedure, and shall provide the vendor an opportunity to review any written material regarding the matter. Witnesses may be called at the discretion of the Director of Purchasing. A vendor may submit a written statement, summary, or other document in support of the vendor's position in the matter.

- F. The Director of Purchasing shall determine the weight and credibility to be given any documentation, evidence, and testimony submitted in the matter.
- G. The Director of Purchasing shall render a decision promptly and, unless delayed for good cause, within 30 days after the hearing.
- H. The failure of a vendor to appear at the hearing shall not prohibit the Director of Purchasing from issuing a decision in the matter.
- I. A vendor may be debarred for a period not to exceed five years from the date the Director of Purchasing renders a decision; provided, however, that to be permitted to bid on, supply, or perform, any future projects, goods, or services to be provided the County, the debarred vendor must submit evidence by way of references as to quality of vendor's current quality and performance levels.

§ 49-11. Conforming changes.

Whenever in the Code of Public Local Laws of Kent County, or in any rule or regulation promulgated thereunder or pursuant thereto, reference is made to the "Purchasing Officer," such reference shall be deemed to be to the "Director of Purchasing" as if the same had been originally placed or substituted therefor in such provision.