

1. Please tell us how you prepared for this new assignment as Purchasing Agent for Anne Arundel County, Md., Department of Central Services, Purchasing Division?

Although it has been several years since I started the position, I remember that I did a lot of research on the County and its procurement operations. I printed out all of the laws and regulations and came to the interview with a book of research. I was fortunate that this opportunity aligned very well with my qualifications and experience in leading procurement operations for other organizations. Despite the position being a good fit, I was still was anxious starting out. I am also lucky to have had such exceptional support from our Central Services Officer Christine Romans and her Deputy Nancy Noonan. Also, there is a wonderful group of individuals in our Purchasing Family who have made me feel welcome.

2. Did you have any mentors along the way and if so, how did they assist you?

Yes, I have been very fortunate to have several throughout my career. First, I would say Mike Hausler and the Team I worked with at Pulte/Del Webb in the Chicago Metro Area. They took an over-ambitious new construction manager and helped me to at least become a very knowledgeable over-ambitious construction manager. It was a wonderful place to start my career. I learned critical organization skills and time management skills that still serve me well today. Additionally, Tony Queen and Deborah Murphy and the rest of the team at Standard Supplies Inc. Tony was the Operations Manager and my supervisor and Deborah was the owner of this small women-owned construction supply business in Gaithersburg, MD. Not only did they believe in me, but they helped me better understand the challenges and complexity faced by small businesses in the State of Maryland. In this organization, I had the opportunity to get exposure to government sales. I learned how it felt to sit on the other side of a government solicitation and strategies that made me successful at winning County government contracts. Using these perspectives helps me better understand the needs of SB's, MBEs, WBEs that are interested in bidding on County Procurements. Also, I should include Rob Joseph and Joe Wantz on that list. I worked with these managers at Parsons and at CSC. Both were excellent leaders and managers and taught me real-world management and communication lessons that can't be taught from a book.

3. What are the responsibilities and duties of the Office of Central Services?

We provide general services to support internal County operations. The Office of Central Services is comprised of five divisions: Risk Management, Facilities, Fleet, Real Estate, and Purchasing.

3a. Can you explain the procurement opportunities for each of the following, Risk Management, Facilities, Fleet, and Real Estate? And will you seek purchasing inclusion opportunities on them?

We are interested in growing our minority, small, women-owned, and veteran-owned business participation for all County procurements including those in Central Services. For all County Agencies, we work to locate and include small, minority, women-owned, or veteran-owned businesses for small procurements (under \$50,000) when we obtain three quotes. Our MBE

Coordinator helps to locate and connect with minority, small, women-owned, and veteran-owned business to encourage these businesses to respond to formal competitive procurements being publicly released. The procurement opportunities vary across the Central Services Divisions. Some of the upcoming competitive solicitations for Facilities include Roofing Services, Water and Mold Remediation, Elevator Maintenance, and Septic Services. For Fleet, we regularly release competitive solicitations for vehicles and vehicle equipment. The Real Estate and Risk Management Divisions procurement needs are less frequent and are more specialized to their areas of operation.

4. What are your responsibilities as Purchasing Agent?

I am the Division Chief / Head of the Purchasing Division. In addition to Purchasing, our team also has responsibility for operations of the County's Mail Room and Fixed Asset Management. I am fortunate to have a wonderful team of professionals who execute the daily procurement needs and our Mail Room staff, and Fixed Asset Staff are exceptional.

5. What is the current policy in letting work to certified minority and women-owned business enterprises? Do you set spending goals on procurements for that said group? If so, how and at what percentages?

Over the last three-plus years, I have been with the County, we have been very involved with conducting outreach to build our pool of minority, small, and women-owned businesses who respond to our procurements. The County's MBE spend fluctuates based on changes in the County's overall spend and can be impacted by the timing of specific procurements and factors such as seasonal spend related to weather events.

Outreach is great, but we are ready to start doing more. We are putting plans together to request budget availability for conducting a disparity study. Our goal is to use expert suggestions and develop changes that meet with our operation and legal requirements. It is likely that this first step will include a goal for our MBE/SB/WOSB participation, but we need that input of what is reasonable through a disparity study and how this could be implemented successfully given the County's procurement laws and regulations.

6. Does your department track spending with that said group? If so, how?

Yes, we do track that information and it is released annually in the Purchasing Annual Report available on the County's website.

7. What certifying indexes such as Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) do you accept in recognizing legitimate minority and women-owned business enterprises?

Our new e-Procurement system allows for any certification to be recorded in your vendor records. In the past, we have not required a specific certification for verification of MBE/SB/WOSB/Etc. Our concern was creating additional hurdles for those businesses. With a disparity study, we look to be able to get expert input as to the impact of requiring the certification would have on our current and future contractor and vendor base.

8. With the election of new County Executive Steuart Pittman are there any new changes planned to procurement? If so, what are they?

Executive Pittman is focused on ensuring the Anne Arundel County Government has what is needed to serve the County residents. His Administration has made us aware that they would like to grow our MBE program and has supported our recommendations to request funds for our disparity study.

9. How does one locate new procurements coming out of your department? And, does one have to pre-register with you to get information?

The website address is: <https://www.aacounty.org/departments/central-services/purchasing/P.O.R.T./bids/index.html>. We also advertise in the Capital Gazette and will be posting our procurements on the new EMMA website offered by the State of Maryland.

10. Will the county consider recognizing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer (LGBTQ) business communities as a disadvantage business group and procure with them?

We are looking into that. The County is embarking on the first step in a journey to make our MBE program more defined, with specific goals, and a clear path on how to be able to achieve those goals. The first step needs to be the study that can provide us with expert suggestions combined with operational impact analysis for us to make changes to how we procure goods and services.

11. If a minority or women-owned business is mistreated by a prime construction contractor, what can do to seek assistance in resolving the issue(s)?

Our construction contracts over \$50,000 have a labor and materials bond so if a small minority business is not being paid for goods or services rendered, then they should contact our team in Purchasing and we can work to address the issue appropriately based on the circumstances.

12. What makes your job so great?

I love the fact that we can see the tangible goods and services we procure for the County. Our team takes pride in how our work benefits the residents of Anne Arundel County!