# Purchasing Quarterly

Spring 2008, Volume 8, Issue 2. A Publication of the Travis County Purchasing Office, Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M., Purchasing Agent


## Know your Purchasing Office

### Nancy Barchus

By Jerome T. Guerrero

Nancy is a vibrant, joyful woman who at almost 7 years with Travis County, is the professional career woman. Prior to Travis County, she had 20 years with AT&T, Pacific Telephone & Telegraph and Southwestern Bell Telephone.

Always eager to learn, she has several degrees including a Bachelor of Arts and Fine Arts from the University of North Dakota and a Masters of Business Administration from St. Edwards University. She continues to expand her knowledge - she recently earned her Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB) designation.

She met her late husband, Gale Barchus while taking classes at Austin Community College. Gale was a political science instructor at the University of Texas at Austin, ACC, Concordia and St. Edwards Universities. Together they had Jessica, who is a drama major at the University of Dallas.

A native of Grand Forks, North Dakota, Nancy graduated from Grand Forks Central High School, the only high school in town. "I had some of the same teachers that my mother and younger sister had."

In her 20 years with AT&T, she worked her way from a telephone operator

*See "Know Your Purchasing Office," continued on page 4*

## 2008 Purchasing Liaison Workshop

By Betty Chapa

When the doors opened the 2008 Purchasing Liaison Appreciation Workshop on Thursday, March 27th at the Central Christian Church, it was with great anticipation and excitement for everyone in attendance. Forty-seven Purchasing Liaisons were in attendance to hear opening remarks from Judge Samuel T. Biscoe, an overview of *Purchasing Policies and Procedures* from Purchasing Agent, Cyd V. Grimes, and *Ethics of a Public Servant* from John Steiner, the Integrity Officer for the City of Austin.

Many may wonder what a Purchasing Liaison is and what their role is with the Travis County Purchasing Office. A Purchasing Liaison is KEY to the functionality and communication line between the Purchasing Office and Travis County Departments. Not only does a Liaison have their day-to-day duties, but they've also taken on this role that includes knowing what is needed, ensuring funds are available, submitting requisitions that outline their requirements to the purchasing staff, receiving items into HTE, and submitting original invoices to the Auditor's Office.

As public servants of Travis County it is imperative that liaisons and staff understand ethics, as they hold important positions and play vital roles within Travis County.

Mr. Steiner's presentation titled "Organizational Ethics and the Public Servant" focused on five core values:

*See "Purchasing Liaison Workshop," continued on page 4*

## Inside this Issue


1 Know Your Purchasing Office
1 Purchasing Liaision Workshop
2 R.A.V.E.
3 VTS Update
3 Ethics - A Practical Guide
3 Economic Opportunity Forums
4 Purchasing Liaisons
4 Laugh A Little
5 Special Information
6 Photos from Liaison Workshop



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Purchasing Agent

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# R.A.V.E. - Recognize A VALUE-able Employee

## Ken Gaede

By Jerome T. Guerrero

Ken Gaede, R.A., Senior Project Manager, has been with Travis County 12 years. A former self-employed Design/Build (D/B) contractor working general construction and architecture as well as several jail projects for the county, he was the logical choice to lead the Design/Build project for the Travis County Correctional Complex (TCCC) at Del Valle.

As the Project Manager for Travis County's first D/B project, he was involved in the planning, bond committee meetings, public hearings, negotiations with the prime contractor and meeting with the County Attorney's Office to create a D/B contract. Marvin Brice, Assistant Purchasing Agent, and Ken worked together to represent the interests of Travis County before and during construction.

The TCCC expansion will add 1,336 beds for inmates and have 257,174 square feet of total floor area. Construction began in July 2007 with an expected completion in early 2009.

Ken handles the mundane, as well as the atypical,

*An early morning concrete pour at the TCCC*
*photo courtesy of Ken Gaede*

events of each day for such a large project. He makes an early morning site visit, talking to the different superintendents, contractors and workers about what they are doing, and what is going on for the day. Due to the D/B structure, change orders are very minor, "I monitor changes and discussions between the contractor and designer, ensuring that Travis County gets what we are asking and paying for with the project." In the afternoon, he does another site visit.

Some days Ken is there at 5:30 a.m. to watch a concrete pour, making sure the process is in accordance with Travis County standards. Concrete has to be poured within a certain time, before the concrete hardens. "Sometimes things happen and it makes the day exciting and difficult." Ken keeps a close eye on the project along with the D/B consultant hired by Travis County.

At home, Ken is engaged in his own D/B project by doing some home remodeling. He is expanding his home by building a small addition. "I know what I like to do and what I want to have someone else do." He loves to do his own carpentry such as decking, railings, trim, and cabinets.

Back at the TCCC project, he adds, "I've been real happy with the progress of the project. I see everyone working hard to make sure we (Travis County) are getting what we are paying for. Sometimes it is fun to watch the different crews working their craft. Such as the concrete crew, it is like a choreographed dance, there are no wasted motions when they are placing concrete. It is precision, it is art."

*Ken and Marvin Brice take time from their busy schedules to check the afternoon's progress.*

# Purchasing Code of Ethics Guide

## Part 2 - Bribes

In our Winter 2008 issue there was a brief summary of the "Purchasing Policy and Procedures Manual," specifically the Code of Ethics. The Purchasing Office presents this column dedicated as a practical guide to ethics.

When you find yourself in a situation that might compromise or expose yourself and/or the county to potential embarrassment or legal consequences, this upcoming series of articles will hopefully instruct you in making the correct legal and moral decision.

The first practical guide is to test your situation with a simple question. "How would my actions or the actions of a potential vendor look if reported in the local newspaper?" The local media enjoys catching public officials and employees in compromising actions. There have been several local and out-of-town incidents exposing public officials and employees accepting gifts or using their positions for personal gain.

Recently, three Texas Department of Transportation employees in the McAllen area allegedly accepted money from $200 to $2,000 to award a contractor work. Since the contract work involved federal money, the McAllen F.B.I. and the Texas Rangers are investigating.[1] As of May 8, 2008, the three have plead guilty to accepting bribes in exchange for contracts, according to the U.S. attorney's office. "Anytime there are allegations of wrongdoing with any of our employees, it's a sad time for our department," TxDOT spokesman Chris Lippincott said. "We are doing everything we can to cooperate with authorities and remain committed to integrity."[2]

County policy states "Employees shall not solicit or accept money, loans, gifts, favors, or anything of value, from present or potential contractors that might influence or appear to influence a purchasing decision. Generally, goods or services with a value of $50 or less in the aggregate from a vendor during a year do not violate this prohibition unless they influence or appear to influence a specific purchasing decision." Again, ask yourself, how would this look if I read this in the newspaper or watched it on the TV news?

The Purchasing Policy and Procedures Manual is available either online at http://tcnet/ipurch/docs.html or by requesting a hard copy. If you ever have any questions or concerns, contact the Purchasing Office to assist you in making the right decision.

[1] (http://www.themonitor.com/articles/accepting_10804 article.html/txdot_beltran.html)

[2] http://corridornews.blogspot.com/2008/05/former-txdot-officials-plead-guilty-to.html

# Questions & Answers from the Purchasing Office

Question: If I have documents to deliver to one of the buyers, do I need to stop at the front desk?
Answer: Yes. All documents must be time and date stamped by the front office staff.

Question: How many copies do I need to submit with my bid?
Answer: Each solicitation will indicate the number of copies needed, a minimum would include at least the original and two copies. Read the solicitation carefully.

Question: Do I need to attend pre-bids?
Answer: Most pre-bids are optional, but mandatory pre-bids will be stated in the specifications. If the pre-bid is mandatory, a representative of the prime bidder must attend. Read the solicitation carefully.

Question: What do I include on my invoice?
Answer: Include your contract and purchase order number along with any HUB Payment Reports. Make sure your quantities and prices match the purchase order.

# Economic Opportunity Forums

06/30/08 - Austin
City of Austin Construction Procurement Opportunities
Address: 301 W. 2nd Street/City Hall Council Chambers & Atrium
Information: 5 pm - 8 pm; Various City of Austin departments, complimentary parking at City Hall; Networking and light refreshments
RSVP by 06/23/08 before 4 pm at (512) 974-7600

07/10/08 - Austin
Texas Lottery Commission Annual HUB Forum
Address: The forum will take place at Texas Lottery headquarters, at 611 East 6th Street, Austin, Texas.
Information: Event hours will be 1:00 - 4:30 p.m. The forum will present information about the TLC's HUB program, procurement opportunities, and Mentor Protege initiatives. ROUNDTABLE NETWORKING SESSIONS with key TLC staff and prime contractors will be the highlight of this event. All roundtable assignments will be made on a first-come, first-serve basis on the day of the forum.
Contact: Please register on or before 7/3/08. Vendor registration is available on-line at: www.txlottery.org/hub For more information, contact Joyce Bertolacini at (512) 344-5293 or joyce.bertolacini@lottery.state.tx.us

07/11/08 - Austin
DIR 2nd Annual Statewide Technology Contracting HUB Forum
REGISTRATION WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON
Address: J.J. Pickle Center
Information: DIR
Contact: Bernadette Davis HUB Coordinator
www.DIR.STATE.TX.US (512) 463-5712

07/31/08 - Austin, Texas
TAMACC State Convention Business & Consumer Expo. Thursday, July 31, 2008 is a full day of Procurement Round table sessions. Over 1,000 minority certified vendors are expected.
Address: Hilton Austin Hotel.
Information: TAMACC (512) 444-5727 www.tamacc.org
Contact: Frank Cortez, President TAMACC (512) 444-5727

# Vendor Tracking Systems (VTS) Update

By Jerome T. Guerrero

The Design/Build project at the Travis County Correctional Complex (TCCC) is the first county project using the interactive features of VTS.

A primary goal of the system is to enter accurate dollars paid to subcontractors. So far, Approximately $2,384,464 has been reported and verified through VTS by the prime contractor, FaulknerUSA.

If you want to learn more, contact me at (512)854-4852

# Purchasing Liaisons
## - It's all about You!

By Betty Chapa

That's right Purchasing Liaisons!, it's all about you! We would like to present to you, the Purchasing Liaison's Logo.

This logo illustrates the roles of the Purchasing Liaisons, as the communicators between departments and the Purchasing Office and the diversity within ourselves and each department.

We all want to achieve a common goal, which is putting Travis County and the Taxpayers on top!

Purchasing Liaisons - when you see this logo this will be your signal informing you that there is important information that pertains to you and/or your respective departments.

Purchasing Liaisons

### *Purchasing Liaison Workshop, continued from page 1*

transparency and impartiality; keeping our personal interests away from our official decision making; ensuring that our actions aren't for sale; making sure that government property is used only for the public good; and ensuring fairness in the compliance with the laws required in the expenditure of taxpayers' money. Attendees all agreed, "I enjoyed Mr. Steiner's presentation….great speaker!"

*Purchasing Agent, Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M. networks with Laura Taylor, Liaison for the District Clerk's Office*

*John Steiner, Integrity Officer for the City of Austin addressed the workshop attendees on the importance of transparency and impartiality.*

The networking segment of the workshop allowed both liaisons and purchasing staff to put a name with a face.

The workshop was a success. The Travis County Purchasing Office wishes to **THANK** all Purchasing Liaisons for all that they do for the taxpayers of Travis County, their departments and the Purchasing Office!

### *Know Your Purchasing Office continued from page 1*

to the maintenance center manager supervising the West Texas area. She retired from Southwestern Bell in 2000 and took off 6 months before saying about retirement, "It was boring, I hated it!"

She attended a job fair where she met Debbie Rich from the Travis County Sheriff's Office. "I saw all these big, macho sheriffs around the booth - I felt very intimidated." She waited and when Debbie was alone, she walked up to "get her free pens and pencils." While talking to Debbie, she learned they shared common interests. Their children attended the same day care when they were younger. Debbie encouraged Nancy to apply to the Sheriff's Office. She began work in data entry then moved to the finance office where she was introduced to purchasing. Nancy has made the transition to the Purchasing Office nicely. She is eager, and always ready to learn.

"I'm so pleased that I found this second career. I like working with the people in the different departments and vendors." There is never a dull moment for Nancy.

One of her first accomplishments in the Purchasing Office was to help implement the e-bid system (rfpdepot). On her first bid, she saved the county several thousand dollars on an adhesive tape bid. Nancy was also instrumental in getting a contract vendor's commodities listed on-line to streamline the ordering process for Facilities Management and other departments. She is always looking for ways to increase competition by meeting new vendors and understanding each department's needs. She continues to look for ways to save the county time and money.

Nancy makes herself available to vendors and liaisons by listening. She brings a lot of knowledge and work experience to the Purchasing Office. Yet, the best thing she brings is herself and her joy.

Special Information
Purchasing Quarterly

# Go, Go, Green!

By Jerome T. Guerrero

*"To lead a better life, I need my love to be here.*
*Here, making each day of the year,*
*Changing my life with a wave of her hand.*
*Nobody can deny that there's something there."*
*Paul McCartney*

Living the green life, not a catchy phrase yet! In the last few decades, there has been a considerable amount of literature dedicated to buying green and being sensitive to our footprint on Earth. When I was asked to write an article about buying green, the first thing I wanted to do was find out what buying green means. After a lot of research, and questioning many of Austin's gurus of green, I've come up with this definition. Buying Green means buying products that were made using materials and resources that have minimal or reduced effect on the environment, customers, employees and communities. I would add that Buying Green also means rethinking your way of consumerism.

When buying, do you really need to make this purchase? If so, how can what I buy make the least use of resources and be fair to those workers that made the product or service? It is interesting that a definition has many questions associated with it. In my readings and considering our consumer society, you really need to ask yourself – "Do I need to buy this product?"

There has been criticism of Whole Foods Market use of organic produce[1]. In order to fulfill their goal of selling organic produce, depending on the time of the year, blueberries, grown outside of the USA are transported by jet to bring you blueberries in the off season. Could you not wait until local blueberries are available? This would save more in money and natural resources. However, with our consumer mentality, we have to have it now!

An alternative would be to check out some of the local farmers markets. The closest farmers market to me is the Sunset Valley Farmers Market[2] located at the Toney Burger Center parking lot. I have purchased locally grown and grass fed steaks and pork loins. One fact to consider when purchasing grass fed steaks – the cooking method is different. Personally, I was not impressed with the grass fed steak, but the pork loins were excellent!

In our throw away society, appliances and other electronic devices are made to be replaced instead of repaired. Think of all the packing materials that are in a TV or radio that you purchase. How many resources were used to bring you that TV or radio? All of the paper, plastics, fuel for transportation and labor that was used to bring you one simple electronic device that you may use occasionally. There is an average of three TVs and 25 electronic devices per American household.[3]

A New York Times article (July 1, 2007) questioned the fashionable chic of buying green, "Critics question the notion that we can avert global warming by buying so-called earth-friendly products, from clothing and cars to homes and vacations, when the cumulative effect of our consumption remains enormous and hazardous." Is buying an ethanol burning vehicle better than keeping your car? Or would it be better to use your old car and take better maintenance through regular oil changes? The article concludes by stating, "People considered their trip down the Eco Options aisles at Home Depot a beginning, not an end point."[4]

Another part of the buying green is determining if the product you purchased was fair to the laborers. Another term that gets used is 'Fair Trade.' You can go to the grocery and purchase organic and Fair Trade coffee. What does that mean? It means that the farmers who grew the coffee were paid a fair price for growing their coffee. It may also mean that the farmers co-op did not use any coerced or forced labor (political prisoners) to pick the coffee, or the pickers were paid a fair wage.

Where does that put the average consumer or public purchaser? The single technique I suggest is to self-monitor. You are correct when you think, 'what can one person do to make a difference?' Are you really being 'Green' when you buy a pair of organic cotton jeans or would it be better to continue to wear your current jeans? If we all would be more aware of what we do and how we do it, change can be affected. In this era of 'what's in it for me?' – try to think outside of yourself. It will be hard to change your buying habits, but we are a nation that can and does adapt to the challenges the world brings to us.

[1] http://www.michaelpollan.com/omnivore.php
[2] http://sunsetvalleyfarmersmarket.org/
[3] http://www.rtoonline.com/Content/article/Apr07/ConsumerElectronicsSpending042707.asp
[4] http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/01/fashion/01green.html

# Purchasing Liaison Workshop 2008