

DOING BUSINESS LOCALLY
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Every year, around Christmastime, we see advertisements. We hear our elected leaders urging us to buy gifts for our loved ones locally. Shop locally is the message. There is a very good reason for this. A portion of sales tax collected for the state remains locally to help fund governmental activities.

If leaders ask citizens to conduct business, to buy and shop locally, then when local government conducts business, it should always try to buy and shop locally. There are times when such is not possible, because expertise or products needed are not available locally. But those times are, and should be, very rare. Money paid out in a municipality through sales, property and other taxes, licenses, and fees, should always be spent there if at all possible.

It is disturbing when local firms are almost never used to supply goods and services to local government. Such local firms are not only usually qualified, but also employ local citizens. When their workers are laid off due to lack of work, they require governmental assistance, also known as tax money, to make ends meet. Going outside a county to purchase goods and services is a procedure in need of change.

There are also other ways of purchasing goods and services, besides the traditional bid method. In that method, the supplier willing to get hurt the worst, or the one who makes the worst mistake, is awarded the contract. Then the winner must find ways to cheat or charge extras, just to survive. It might be interesting to consider these ideas used elsewhere.

If bids must be solicited, change the strategy. Accept bids, average those bids, and award the contract to the offer closest to the average price. They will be the provider who had the best idea of what the work would actually cost, plus a fair profit.

It is also possible to choose a supplier using qualifications or efficiency as the deciding factor. Decide ahead of time, a fair price to pay for goods or services needed. Then accept bids on time frame or delivery method for goods or services, provided for that established price. If a time frame is the determinant, the value of each day could then be established as a bonus or penalty amount for time gained or lost providing the contracted service. This would result in far more accurate scheduling and a much more expedient delivery of services and work provided.

In the consideration of all proposals received, the proximity of the provider to the local government should be the consideration most heavily weighed. It is their money being utilized.