

ARTICLE 9

APPEALS, PROTESTS AND REMEDIES

Sec. 1-10-81. Procurement protests.

Authority to Resolve Protested Solicitations and Awards.

- (a) *Right to Protest.* Any actual or prospective bidder, offeror, or contractor who is aggrieved in connection with the solicitation or award of a contract may protest to the Procurement Director.
- (b) *Authority to Resolve Protests.* The Procurement Director and the Administrator shall have the authority, prior to a final decision by the Commission, to settle and resolve the protest of an aggrieved bidder, offeror, or contractor, actual or prospective, concerning the solicitation or award of a contract.
- (c) *Decision of Procurement Director.* If the protest is not resolved by mutual agreement, the Procurement Director shall issue a decision in writing regarding the protest as specified in Section 1-10-83. The decision shall:
 - (1) state the reasons for the action taken; and
 - (2) inform the protester of its right to administrative review as provided in this Article.
- (d) *Notice of Decision.* A copy of the decision shall be mailed or otherwise furnished to the protestor and any other interested party.
- (e) *Finality of Decision.* A decision under Subsection (d) of this Section shall be final and conclusive, unless any person adversely affected by the decision files a timely appeal in accordance with Article 9 of this code.
- (f) *Stay of Procurements During Protests or Appeals.* In the event of a timely protest under section 1-10-82 of this Article, the Procurement Director shall not proceed further with the solicitation or with the award of the contract unless the Administrator, after consultation with the head of the using agency and General Counsel, makes determination that the award of the contract without delay is necessary to protect substantial interests of Augusta, Georgia. Such a determination may be made orally in a

Committee Meeting, a Commission Meeting or may be provided to the protestor in writing.

1-10-82. Filing of protest.

- (a) Protests shall be made in writing to the Procurement Director and shall be filed in within five (5) business days after the protestor knows or should have known of the facts giving rise thereto. A protest is considered filed when received by the Procurement Department. **Protests filed after the five (5) day period shall not be considered and are deemed a failure on the part of the protestor to exhaust administrative remedies.**
- (b) *Subject of Protest.* Protestors may file a protest on any phase of solicitation or award including but not limited to specifications preparation, bid solicitation, award, or disclosure of information marked confidential in the bid or offer.
- (c) To expedite handling of protests, the written protest shall include as a minimum the following:
 - (1) the name and address of the protestor;
 - (2) appropriate identification of the procurement, and, if a contract has been awarded, its number;
 - (3) a statement of reasons for the protest; and
 - (4) supporting exhibits, evidence, or documents to substantiate any claims unless not available within the filing time in which case the expected availability date shall be indicated.
- (d) *Requested Information; Time for Filing.* Any additional information requested by any of the parties should be submitted within the time periods established Procurement Director in order to expedite consideration of the protest. Failure of any party to comply expeditiously with a request for information by the Procurement Director may result in resolution of the protest without consideration of any information which is untimely filed pursuant to such request.
- (e) *Making Information on Protests Available.* The Procurement Director shall upon written request make available to any interested party information submitted that bears on the substance of the protest except where

information is proprietary, confidential, or otherwise prohibited from disclosure or required to be withheld by law or regulation. Persons who wish to keep such information submitted by them confidential should so request by specifically identifying such information within documents submitted, and indicating on the front page of each document that it contains such information.

Sec. 1-10-83. Decision by the Procurement Director

Time for Decisions. A written decision on a protest shall be made by the Procurement Director within ten (10) business days after receiving all relevant, requested information. If a protest is sustained, the Procurement Director may determine that the solicitation or award violates the law; or may make a determination that the solicitation should be cancelled in order to comply with the applicable law.

Sec. 1-10-84. Appeals.

Appeal of a decision of the Procurement Director may be requested by the protestor or any department involved in the protest. The appeal shall contain a detailed statement of the factual and legal grounds upon which reversal or modification is deemed warranted.

Sec. 1-10-85. Time for filing appeal.

Appeals of a decision of the Procurement Director shall be filed in the Procurement Department not later than five (5) business days after receipt of such decision.

Sec. 1-10-86. Request for hearing and effect of untimely appeal.

A contractor or prospective contractor that has been notified of a denial of its protest action may request in writing an appeal to the Augusta, Georgia Commission. All appeals must be received by the Procurement Department within five (5) business days. **Appeals filed after the five (5) day period shall not be considered and are deemed a failure on the part of the protestor to exhaust administrative remedies.** Where no appeal (or an untimely appeal) is filed, the Procurement Director's decision is considered final and the award shall proceed.

Sec. 1-10-87. Notice of hearing.

If a timely appeal is filed by the protestor, the Procurement Director shall place the protest on the agenda of the Administrative Services Committee. The Clerk of Commission's Office shall provide public notice of the Administrative Services Committee agenda as required by law. In addition, the protestor shall be sent written notice of the time and place of the hearing. Copies of such notice shall be sent to the Augusta, Georgia General Counsel and the Department Director of the appropriate user department.

Sec. 1-10-88. Administrative Services Committee hearing procedures and effect of failure to appear at hearing. (Ordinance 7439 - Approved 11-19-13)

- (a) Protests appearing on the Administrative Services Committee shall be treated as any other Committee agenda item, except that the Protestor, or his or her representative, shall have the right to address the Committee and to present evidence in support of the protest for a maximum of ten (10) minutes. The Procurement Director and user department, or their representative, shall also have the opportunity to present evidence relating to the protest for a maximum of ten (10) minutes. The Chairman of the Administrative Services Committee may grant additional time equally to each party at his or her discretion.
- (b) After considering the evidence presented, the Administrative Services Committee shall make a recommendation to grant or deny the protest, or to send the item to the full Augusta, Georgia Commission without recommendation. Regardless of the action taken by the Committee, the protest shall be forwarded to the full Commission agenda for a final decision. The Clerk of Commission shall make an audio recording of the protest hearing and shall make such recording available to Commissioners within two (2) business days following the hearing.
- (c) Procedure to Speak to Full Commission Regarding Protest.
A protestor seeking to speak to the full Commission regarding his or her protest must submit a request in writing, including his/her address and the name of the procurement being protested, no later than 5:00 p.m. on the Wednesday preceding the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting that follows the Administrative Services Committee protest hearing. Such request shall be provided to the Clerk of Commission with a copy to be provided to the Procurement Director. When the protest is heard by the Commission, the protestor and the Procurement Director shall each have five (5) minutes to summarize the arguments and evidence presented to the

Administrative Services Committee. The Commission will not hold a new hearing and will not accept new evidence. If the protestor has not made a timely request to address the full Commission, the Commission may, at its discretion, dispose of the agenda item via the Consent Agenda.

- (d) Effect of Failure to Appear at Hearing. Failure on the part of the Protestor to appear before either the Administrative Services Committee or the full Augusta, Georgia Commission is considered **an abandonment of their right to appeal and a failure on the part of the protestor to exhaust administrative remedies.** The Procurement Director's decision is considered final and the award shall proceed accordingly. However, the Chairman of the Administrative Services Committee or the Mayor may, at his or her discretion, grant the Protestor one continuance to the next regularly scheduled Committee or Commission Meeting. Such continuance may only be granted during the Committee or Commission meeting and shall be recorded on the minutes of such meeting.

Sec. 1-10-89. Authority of Administrator to participate in procurement matters.

The Augusta, Georgia Administrator has the authority to:

- (a) communicate with the protestor and other interested parties to try to settle any dispute, or narrow the issues for matters to be presented to the Committee or Commission;
- (b) consult with the Procurement Director, the User Department and the General Counsel regarding the need for a stay pursuant to Section 1-10-81(f);
- (c) participate in all aspects of the procurement process as necessary to support the best interests of Augusta, Georgia.

Sec. 1-10- 90. Hearing procedures.

- (a) Hearings shall be as informal as may be reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances and in accordance with the applicable rules of the Administrative Services Committee and Commission. The Procurement Director shall provide the Administrative Services Committee and Commission with copies of the protest and the response of the Procurement Department.

- (b) Witnesses providing testimony at before the Administrative Services Committee or Commission shall testify under oath or affirmation.

Sec. 1-10-91. Determination of Commission; final decision.

The Commission's decision regarding a Protest is the final step in the Appeals process for Augusta, Georgia. The parties shall have thirty (30) days to file a judicial appeal of any such decision. Such appeal shall be by writ of certiorari to the Superior Court of Richmond County.

Sec. 1-10-92. Contract claims.

Decision of Augusta, Georgia Administrator. All claims by a contractor or vendor against Augusta, Georgia relating to a contract shall be submitted in writing to the Augusta, Georgia Administrator. The contractor or vendor may request a conference on the claims. Claims include, without limitation, disputes arising under a contract, and those based upon breach of contract, mistake, misrepresentation, or other cause for contract modification or rescission.

Sec. 1-10-93. Augusta, Georgia's right to amend bid solicitations or awards that are in violation of law.

Applicability. This section applies where it is determined by administrative review that a solicitation or award of a contract is in violation of applicable law. For purposes of this section administrative review shall refer to a review by the Procurement Director and/or Augusta, Georgia Administrator in consultation with the General Counsel.

- (a) *Prior to bid opening or closing date for receipt of proposals.* If prior to the bid opening or the closing date for receipt of proposals, the Procurement Director, after consultation with the Augusta, Georgia Administrator, and the Augusta, Georgia General Counsel, determines that a solicitation is in violation of federal, state, or local law or ordinance, then the solicitation shall be canceled or revised to comply with applicable laws.
- (b) *Prior to award.* If after bid opening or the closing date for receipt of proposals, the Procurement Director, after consultation with the Administrator or his designee, and the General Counsel determine that a solicitation or proposed award is in violation of federal, state or municipal

law, then the solicitation or proposed award shall be canceled.

- (c) *After award.* If, after an award, the Procurement Director, after consultation with the Administrator and the General Counsel, determines that a solicitation or award of a contract was in violation of applicable law, the following options shall be available to Augusta, Georgia:
- (1) The contract may be ratified and affirmed, provided it is determined that doing so is in the best interest of Augusta, Georgia and the person or company awarded the contract has not acted fraudulently or in bad faith; or
 - (2) If services or work have not commenced under the contract, it may be terminated and declared null and void; or
 - (3) If services or work have commenced under the contract, it may be terminated and the person awarded the contract shall be compensated for the actual expenses reasonably incurred for partially performing and in terminating its performance under the contract.