PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO QUALIFIED PURCHASING AGENT (QPA) REGULATIONS, N.J.A.C. 5:34-5.2 – 5.3, CHANGES TO “GREEN PURCHASING,” AND OTHER PROVISIONS

April 30, 2014

The proposed changes to the Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA) Certification regulations are not yet approved, but will likely be available for future public comment in the New Jersey Register. You will be notified at a later date by the Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) if the changes become official.

EXAM REQUIREMENTS

Current requirement

Applicants for the QPA exam administered after June 30, 2014, are required to complete the “green” purchasing course, Environmentally Preferable Procurement (EPP), as administered by the Rutgers Center for Government Services, for admission to the exam.

Proposed change

- The date for this requirement will be extended to those sitting for the exam after June 30, 2015.
- As opposed to a separate required course, components of the pilot course for EPP would instead be incorporated into the existing purchasing courses, likely Principles of Public Purchasing III.
- Students that otherwise complete the Rutgers purchasing courses prior to the new EPP material being incorporated into the courses will instead have to certify in the exam application as to completion of 2 training hours in the subject area of green purchasing, as approved by DLGS.
- Those otherwise exempt from taking the existing purchasing courses in order to qualify for the exam (certified municipal/county finance officers, etc.) must meet the above 2 hour requirement for green purchasing in order to sit for the exam.
- Those individuals applying for a QPA certificate after June 30, 2015, who are otherwise exempt from having to take the exam (SBAs), must meet the above 2 hour requirement.

CHANGES FOR CURRENT QPAS IN REGARD TO GREEN PURCHASING

Current requirement

Those currently holding a QPA certificate must complete the EPP course within four years of it becoming available. Completion of the one-time course requirement is to be separate from completion of the required 20 hours of continuing education every three years.

Proposed change

As opposed to being a separate course, QPAs will need to obtain 2 of the 20 hours of continuing education that are required every 3 years in a new subject area of green purchasing, as proposed in the renewal changes noted below.
CHANGES TO RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS

Current requirement

QPAs must obtain 20 hours of continuing education every 3 years. Of the 20 hours, QPAs are to obtain a minimum of 3 hours in ethics. There are no minimum hours required for the other subject areas.

Proposed change

- Of the 20 hours, QPAs will need to get a minimum of 2 hours in each of the following subject areas: procurement procedures, office admin./general duties, and the new subject area of “green” purchasing. Ethics will still require a minimum of 3 hours, and information technology will still be optional - no minimum hours required in this subject.

- The 11 additional hours required toward the total 20 can be obtained in any mix of subject areas.

- QPAs who already submitted their renewals to DLGS, or do so before the proposed amendments become effective, do not have to resubmit with the 2 hours in green purchasing, as this will not be required until renewal cycles expiring no later than June 30, 2019.

- The Division will have the discretion, for good cause, to waive the minimum hours in subject areas if a QPA has not met the minimums (no waiver of the 20 hour total permitted).

- The above waiver will not apply to the 2 hours in green purchasing for renewals expiring no later than June 30, 2019. In other words, QPA renewals expiring on or before June 30, 2019, will require the 2 hours in green purchasing. For renewals after that date, the Division can, for good cause, waive the 2 hour minimum in green purchasing.

EXTENSION OF GRACE PERIOD

Current requirement

All QPAs have a six month grace period to renew their certification beyond their actual renewal due date. No further extension to renew is permitted.

Proposed change

Due to circumstances that would create a hardship to renew by the end of a grace period (emergency declaration, valid medical reason), the Director of DLGS may extend a particular grace period to enable a QPA(s) to obtain the necessary 20 hours.

RENEWAL FEE

Currently, there is no fee to renew a QPA certification. There has been some discussion to require this (similar to the other certifications DLGS administers). However, nothing definite has been proposed at this time.

Any questions, contact Dan Kaminski at DLGS at Daniel.Kaminski@dca.state.nj.us, or at (609) 292-9757