

## Useful Tips on Hiring a Contractor

1. ***Get Recommendations:***
  - a. Start with friends and family, then contact the Building Department at (440) 582-3000 for a listing of registered, licensed, insured and bonded contractors.
2. ***Do interviews:***
  - a. Contact each of your prospective contractors and ask the following questions:
    - i. Do you normally take projects of my nature and size?
    - ii. Will you provide references of similar projects that you have completed?
    - iii. Can you provide a list of references and their contact information?
    - iv. How many projects will you have going at the same time as mine?
  - b. The answers to these as well as any other questions you may pose to the prospective contractor will reveal the contractor's availability, reliability and how much attention he or she will give your project.
3. ***Meet face to face with the potential contractor:***
  - a. Pick three to four contractors to meet for further discussion. A contractor should put you at ease. It's crucial that you communicate well because he or she will be on your property for several hours or even days depending on the project to be completed. Don't let personality fool you, check with the local Better Business Bureau to make sure there's no history of disputes with previous customers.
4. ***Investigate the facts:***
  - a. Call former customers to learn how their project went, even more important, if you can, visit a current job site and see for yourself how the contractor works. Is the job site neat and safe? Are workers careful and courteous and do they take care of the property?
5. ***Make plans, get bids:***
  - a. You have your short list of contractors whose track records seem clean and whose work ethic looks responsible. Now it's time to start looking forward to your project.
  - b. To compare bids, ask each bidding contractor to break down the cost of materials, labor profit margin and other expenses. Generally, materials account for 40 percent of the total cost; the rest covers overhead and the typical profit margin is 15 to 20 percent.
6. ***Put it in writing:***
  - a. Draw up an agreement or contract. Make sure that the agreement details every aspect of the overall project; payment terms; a start date and projected completion date; specific materials to be used.
7. ***Insisting on a clear agreement isn't about mistrust;*** it's about insuring a successful project.

**TIP:** Beware of change orders! All new requests add to your projects duration and cost. The costliest words in the English language? ***“While you’re at it”***