



March 12, 2025

Disposition of Surplus County Property

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Reference Number: CTAS-709

Generally, the county legislative body may by resolution direct the sale and conveyance of county real property and personal property other than school property. T.C.A. § 5-7-101. However, in those counties operating pursuant to the County Purchasing Law of 1957, property that is declared surplus, obsolete or unusable must be disposed of by the purchasing agent either by sale at auction or by competitive bid, excepting books and other material in general circulation at a county public library. T.C.A. 5-14-108(o). In counties operating under the County Financial Management System of 1981, the director of finance has responsibility for the public sale of all surplus materials, equipment, buildings and land. T.C.A. § 5-21-118. The county board of education has the authority to determine the sale or transfer of county school property, both real and personal. Surplus school personal property valued at \$250 or more is sold to the highest bidder unless sold or transferred to a local government. The county board of education may transfer surplus real property to the county or to a municipality within the county without sale or competitive bidding. T.C.A. §§ 49-6-2006, -2007. All counties may sell surplus property by internet auction whenever they are required by law or their charter to sell surplus property by public auction. T.C.A. § 5-1-128.

Notwithstanding any other laws to the contrary, T.C.A. § 12-2-420 (formerly T.C.A. § 12-3-1005) authorizes counties to establish a procedure by resolution of the governing body for the disposition of used or surplus personal property to other governmental entities, including but not limited to other counties, municipalities, metropolitan governments, state or federal government, any other state governments and their political subdivisions, and instrumentalities of the foregoing, without the necessity of public advertisement or competitive bidding, upon such terms as the governing body may authorize. T.C.A. § 12-2-420.

Under T.C.A. § 12-9-110, public agencies, including county legislative bodies and boards of education, have broad power to convey or transfer both real property and personal property to other public entities without sale or competitive bidding. The conveyance may be made by an agreement between the governing bodies of the public agencies authorizing the conveyance and determining that the terms and conditions are appropriate. The public agency or agencies receiving the conveyance or transfer must use the property for a public purpose. This provision may be used without declaring property surplus, and it supersedes any contrary requirements in any other general law or private act. T.C.A. § 12-9-110.

For more detailed information regarding disposition of surplus property, see CTAS-940 under Purchasing.

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