

2019 ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY ETHICS COMMISSION

The 2019 annual report, which is mandated by §7-2-104 of the Public Ethics Law, provides a summary of the work conducted by the ethics commission during the calendar year just ended. This and other information about the commission is also available on its website. A copy of this report is also available in print upon request. The information provided in this report refers to calendar year 2019, unless otherwise indicated.

2019 MEMBERS

Name	Party	Dates of Appointment and Reappointment	Date of Term Expiration
Karl J. Appel	Republican	May 1, 2016	April 30, 2020
Vanessa S. Carter Chair	Democrat	May 1, 2019 January 19, 2016	April 30, 2023
Katherine K. Cawood	Democrat	August 20, 2012 May 1, 2016	April 30, 2020
Emerson C. Davis	Republican	May 1, 2017 November 18, 2013	April 30, 2021
J. Adger Stokes	Republican	July 6, 2015	April 30, 2019
John W. Van de Kamp	Republican	January 10, 2017	April 30, 2020
Dale P. Kelberman	Democrat	June 3, 2019	April 30, 2023
Elizabeth B. Lewis	Democrat	November 18, 2019	April 30, 2023

The commission's staff includes Michael S. Botsaris, Esq., Executive Director and General Counsel, and Gina Scerbo, the commission secretary. Ms. Scerbo is a part-time employee.

In 2019 the commission conducted a majority of its business via email and conference call. It met in formal meetings at the call of its chair on the following dates:

June 10, 2019

Dec. 9, 2019

2019 UPDATE INFORMATION:

INQUIRIES

The commission received 66 ethics inquiries in 2019, up from 63 in 2018. In addition, the commission's staff handled numerous lobbying, financial disclosure, and other types of general questions and inquiries. (Inquiries from lobbyists and other filers are not numbered or summarized unless they result in an administrative decision from the ethics commission.) The sources and primary issues raised in these inquiries were:

TOTAL INQUIRIES: 63

Employees	25
Appointed Officials	19
Elected Officials	18
Citizens	2
Covered Volunteers	1
Lobbyists	1
Anonymous	0
Outside Agency	0
Other	0

The primary issue raised in these inquiries breakdown as follows:

Gifts	23
Prestige of office	16
Secondary employment	7
Non-participation	6
Other	12
Asst/Representation	0
Lobbying	1
Financial Disclosure	0
Post-employment	1
Political Activity	0

ADVISORY OPINIONS

The commission issued 3 formal written advisory opinions. Each opinion is summarized and published on the commission's website. Published opinions can be keyword searched and read in full through the search engine available on the opinions page of the commission's website. Please note that only advisory opinions issued from 2009 or later are available on the website at this time. Earlier advisory opinions are available by request. Many informal requests and inquiries for advice are handled by the director and staff where there is sufficient precedent to provide guidance or where time does not permit consideration of the full commission. In each such case, the ethics commission subsequently reviews and retroactively approves or amends each response.

COMPLAINTS

The commission did not receive any formal written complaints of ethics violations in 2019.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

The commission is charged with the responsibility of reviewing and making available for public inspection, each financial disclosure (FDS) and conflict of interest (COI) statement received from required County employees, elected officials, candidates for elected office, compensated and uncompensated board members, and covered volunteers. Each statement is reviewed for completeness, accuracy, and for potential conflicts of interest. In 2019 the commission received 213 disclosure statements as follows:

Regular employees and covered volunteers	206
New employees	2
Departing employees	5
Candidates	0

Each statement of covered filers was reviewed for completeness and potential conflicts as required by law and employee filers were directed to correct any omissions or deficiencies. All disclosure statements, including corrections and additions, are available for inspection and copying with advance notice at the commission's office as required by law. There were no late filing fees assessed in 2019.

There was 1 request to examine/copy 1 Disclosure of Apparent Conflict of Interest. As required by law, all filers whose statements were examined were notified of that fact in writing. No copying charges were collected in 2019.

LOBBYING

The commission received 97 lobbying registrations from 46 lobbyists. Lobbying registrations, employer authorizations, and activity reports are public documents. The ethics commission staff received, reviewed, and compiled the statistics on 178 bi-annual activity reports. There were no late filing fees assessed. The following information summarizes the compensation and expenditures reported by registered lobbyists in 2019:

Compensation paid to lobbyists	\$504,068.34
Office expenses in addition to compensation	34.00
Professional and technical research and assistance	6,500.00
Publications or letter writing campaigns	0.00
Witnesses.....	900.00
Meals and beverages for county employees and their immediate families.....	52.00
Special events (parties, dinners, athletic events, entertainment, and other functions)	10.00
Food, lodging, or other expenses at a conference or meeting.....	0.00
Other gifts.....	2.00
Miscellaneous expenses.....	426.50

EDUCATION

The ethics commission director presented training sessions for the following employees:

Office of the County Executive	20
County Council	14
Planning Advisory Board	6

Training includes the use of multi-media as well as printed hand-outs and copies of the employee brochure summarizing the ethics law’s conflicts of interest provisions. The ethics commission also provides the brochure, *What employees need to know about the Public Ethics Law* to the Office of Personnel for distribution to all new employees. The brochure is also available to the public upon request.

The commission also updates and publishes two brochures: *What You Need to Know about the Public Ethics Law- Lobbyists* and *What You Need to Know about the Public Ethics Law- Vendors and Contractors*. Both brochures are available at the ethics commission's office and are distributed freely upon request.

In 2019 the commission, in conjunction with the Office of Information Technology, made available to all County employees and officials, an on-line Ethics Training Course to allow everyone to satisfy the mandatory ethics training requirements, at their convenience, on-line. The training course takes about an hour to complete and consists of several chapters with a few questions at the end of each chapter. Upon successful completion (score of 80% or better) employees are able to print out a Certificate of Completion. The commission also maintains an email list of County employees who successfully complete the training. Training is required by law for all employees, board and commission members, and elected officials, within 60 days of hire, appointment or taking office.

At the end of 2019 the training course began a beta testing program and it is now being rolled out on a department by department basis. In 2019, 241 employees completed the course, along with 10 board and commission members. In 2020, all employees, board and commission members, and elected officials, who have not yet completed training, will be referred to the online course.

NEW FORMS

A new online form, REQUEST FOR REVIEW OF SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT, was created and approved by the commission in 2017. It is available on the commission's website for use by County employees. In addition, a new form titled BOARD OR COMMISSION MEMBER CANDIDATE PRE-EXISTING CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE was created in 2018 to address certain issues created by the newly amended Public Ethics Law and in accordance with Section 7-5-102(b)(4) of the ethics law.

BUDGET

Saving money while performing the duties assigned to the commission by the Anne Arundel County Charter has always been a priority. Use of email has largely replaced paper - the commission sends all notifications and disclosure forms to County employees by email in lieu of first-class mail. The commission also requests all disclosure filers (covered volunteers and lobbyists) to accept email notifications and to access all forms via the commission's website.

Many of these filers have agreed to accept email only notifications. The anticipated budget for FY2021 is unchanged.

RECENT ETHICS LAW CHANGES

In October 2017, the State's ethics law was amended as more particularly described in House Bill 879. Since the County is required to keep its local Public Ethics Law "equivalent" and "substantially similar" to the State's ethics law, it was mandatory to amend our law as well to maintain compliance.

In addition to the mandatory changes required by House Bill 879, the director and commission worked closely with the administration to implement several other important changes to the Public Ethics Law as contained in Ethics Bill 80-18 that was passed by the County Council at the end of 2018 and recently became effective. Two of the important changes require mandatory ethics training for all employees within 60 days of hire and every 5 years thereafter, and an amendment to the definition of 'employee' to include compensated and uncompensated board and commission members.

CONCLUSION

The commission schedules its regular meetings for the second Monday of each month at 4:00 p.m. in the conference room at the commission's office on an "as needed or as requested basis". Decisions on whether a physical meeting is called is made by the commission's chair. Any citizen or employee is welcome to attend the open session of the meeting or make an appointment to address the commission concerning any ethics issue. Much of the commission's work is done by email and telephone conference. Contingent meetings are also scheduled for specific dates, but are only held if specially called by the chair. The dates of all scheduled and contingent meetings are available on the ethics commission's website online.

Questions or comments about this report are welcome and may be mailed, emailed, or faxed to the ethics commission.

Respectfully submitted on January 23, 2020 by:

Anne Arundel County Ethics Commission:

Michael S. Botsaris, Esq., Executive Director

Gina Scerbo, Secretary

Vanessa S. Carter, Chair

Katherine K. Cawood, Member

Emerson C. Davis, Member

Karl J. Appel, Member

John W. Van de Kamp, Member

Dale P. Kelberman, Member

Elizabeth B. Lewis, Member