

March 1, 2001
Re: IO-01-25 and IO-01-26

You inquired whether you may accept either of two gifts offered to you by Comcast Cable Communications, Inc., a company that is engaged in activities that are regulated or controlled by the county, specifically, the county council. Since it is a controlled donor, gifts from Comcast are subject to the provisions of §3-105(b) and (c). Those provisions prohibit the acceptance of gifts from controlled donors unless specifically permitted by exception.

Comcast has offered you and three guests tickets to an "exclusive screening of "The Wizard of Oz", in order to help the company celebrate the addition of the Turner Classic Movies station to the Comcast offerings. If this gift had been offered to you personally, it might fall under the exception of §3-105(c)(3) for gifts of nominal value, if the overall value of the gift did not exceed \$25.00. Under these circumstances, it would be your obligation to determine whether the value of this gift meets this criterion. Because this is a business event sponsored by Comcast to promote its services, the gift would not fall within the exception for cultural, charitable, sporting, or political events, under §3-105(c)(5). However, this screening is also offered to the general public on a first come, first served basis, and is no different from the offer that was made to you. Under these circumstances, all that Comcast has offered you is additional notification of an offer made to the general public. Under these circumstances, you may accept the gift without any limitations.

Comcast has also invited you and a guest to attend the Marlborough Hunt Races at Roedown, on Sunday, April 1, 2001. The invitation indicates that there will be ". . . ceremonial presentations with leading state and local officials." This gift falls within the exception for sporting and cultural events under §3-105(c)(5), particularly in view of the fact that there will be a "ceremony involving the office" within the meaning of that provision. Exceptions under this provision do not have a value limit on the gift, although you will need to know the value for the purposes of financial disclosure.

Thank you for your inquiries. If you have other questions, please call any time.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director