

January 11, 2006

By Electronic & Interoffice Mail

Re: IO-06-04

You inquired whether an engineering consultant under contract to the county may pay the travel costs for seven county employees (and some of the consultant's own employees) to travel to Boston for a day to observe and evaluate a new process being used by water treatment facilities there. Presumably, the consultant, who is designing an expansion of an existing county facility, is operating under a contract that covers the consultant's costs and well as certain fixed fees. If that is the case, it will be the county that is actually paying for this trip. Since there is no gift involved in the payment of travel expenses, your inquiry does not come under the Public Ethics Law. However, in order to ensure that this trip is a valid use of county resources, the ethics commission advises that you follow normal county procedures for receiving approval for out-of-state travel in advance of the trip.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director