

June 15, 2006

Re: IO-06-39

You inquired whether you may, in your personal capacity, hold a "meet the candidate" type of event at your home for a candidate for the county council. You are a member of the County Board of Appeals. The answer is that the Public Ethics Law does not prohibit you from holding this event.

The Anne Arundel County Charter establishes the qualifications for members of the board of appeals, which, like the ethics commission, is an independent agency. *Anne Arundel County Charter*, §§601, 1001. Interestingly, while the Charter provision pertaining to members of the Ethics Commission prohibits participation in political activity except for voting and making monetary contributions, §1001(d), there is no similar prohibition applicable to members of the board of appeals. The ethics commission considers this restriction on participating in political activity to be a valuable means to ensure the integrity and to protect the credibility of independent boards and commissions.

The only constraint imposed upon you by the ethics law is that you may not use or permit the use of your county title in any advertising of the event, or in any endorsement of the candidate, or in any remarks made by the candidate about you. Sec. 7-5-107. You may also want to consider the possibility that if the candidate is ultimately successful in his bid, and if he reappoints you to the board of appeals, your impartiality on issues affecting the council member's district may be questioned, whether rightly or wrongly. While the ethics commission advises that you may hold this event, it also advises you to consider the importance of the appearance of impartiality to the credibility of any independent board or commission.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director