

January 19, 2007

Re: AO-07-02

You inquired whether you may continue to serve as the chairperson of the membership committee of the Four Seasons Community Association while you are a member of the County Board of Appeals. You also asked whether you may continue your membership in several county democratic clubs. The ethics commission advises that the ethics law does not prohibit your continued participation in these organizations. There may be some limitation on participation in political activity imposed upon board members by the *Anne Arundel County Charter* or *Code*, but the ethics commission cannot address those questions.

You should be aware of some constraints imposed by the ethics law on your participation in certain matters for the board while you are a member of these various groups. Section 7-5-101(a)(2)(ii) prohibits an employee, including a member of the County Board of Appeals, from participating in any matter if that employee is a member of an entity that is a party to the matter. That means that you may not participate in any matter before the board in which the Four Seasons Community Association is a party.

Even if the community association is not a party to a particular matter, you should not participate in any matter in which the community association has taken a position. While it would not be strictly prohibited by law, your participation would at least raise the appearance of a conflict of interest. The Public Ethics Law is intended to ensure that county employees and volunteers act impartially and with independent judgment to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Should specific matters come before the board that are of concern to you, please contact this office for further guidance. Thank you for your inquiry.

Anne Arundel County Ethics Commission

By: _____
Betsy K. Dawson, Executive Director