

February 23, 2007

By Electronic and Interoffice Mail

Re: AO-07-20

You inquired whether county police officers may accept a discount offered by an apartment complex, for “our much-appreciated Law Enforcement officers.” The apartment complex has advertised a “special” that includes a reduced application fee, reduced security deposit and a discount on the first month’s rent. The ethics commission advises that police officers may accept this discount.

This type of rental discount is not uncommon and it is frequently offered to military personnel, health care workers, teachers, and public safety employees. The offer made in this case is similar. Because it is offered to large numbers of people, including non-county employees, it is not a gift that is offered because of the recipient’s position with the county. The ethics commission has previously advised that discounts may generally be accepted if they are offered to large groups of people as an advertising inducement and require payment of adequate consideration. See, IO-03-106, IO-03-15, IO-01-109, IO-98-17. Since any police officer who rents an apartment in this complex will be paying a standard monthly rental fee (except for the first month), the special that is offered by the rental company requires payment of adequate consideration.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Anne Arundel County Ethics Commission

By: _____
Betsy K. Dawson, Executive Director