

2021 ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY ETHICS COMMISSION

The 2021 annual report, which is mandated by §7-2-104 of the Public Ethics Law, provides a summary of the work conducted by the ethics commission during the calendar year just ended. This and other information about the commission is also available on its website. A copy of this report is also available in print upon request. The information provided in this report refers to calendar year 2021, unless otherwise indicated.

2021 MEMBERS

Name	Party	Dates of Appointment and Reappointment	Date of Term Expiration
Vanessa S. Carter	Democrat	May 1, 2019 January 19, 2016	April 30, 2023
Emerson C. Davis Chair	Republican	November 18, 2013 May 1, 2017	April 30, 2021 (Carried over until 11/15/2021)
Corinne Fitzgerald	Republican	November 15, 2021	April 30, 2025
Dale P. Kelberman Chair	Democrat	June 3, 2019	April 30, 2023
Elizabeth B. Lewis	Democrat	November 18, 2019	April 30, 2023 (resigned 1/15/22)
Robert J. Mansfield	Republican	January 19, 2021	April 30, 2024
Daniel J. Semick	Democrat	May 11, 2020	April 30, 2024
John W. Van de Kamp	Republican	January 10, 2017	April 30, 2020 (Carried over until 10/06/2021)
Solon Webb	Unaffiliated	October 6, 2021	April 30, 2024

The commission's staff includes Michael S. Botsaris, Esq., Executive Director and General Counsel, and Gina Scerbo, the commission secretary. Ms. Scerbo is a part-time employee.

In 2021 the commission conducted a majority of its business via email and conference call. It met remotely via Zoom meetings at the call of its chair on the following dates:

March 2, 2021
April 13, 2021
September 13, 2021

2021 UPDATE INFORMATION:

INQUIRIES

The commission received 59 ethics inquiries in 2021. In addition, the commission's staff handled numerous lobbying, financial disclosure, and other types of general questions and inquiries. (Inquiries from lobbyists and other filers are not numbered or summarized unless they result in an administrative decision from the ethics commission.) The sources and primary issues raised in these inquiries were:

TOTAL INQUIRIES: 59

Employees	27
Appointed Officials	10
Elected Officials	12
Citizens	6
Covered Volunteers	0
Lobbyists	3
Anonymous	1
Outside Agency	0
Other	0

The primary issue raised in these inquiries breakdown as follows:

Boards/Commissions	7
Gifts	2
Prestige of office	11
Secondary employment	8
Non-participation	1
Conflict disclosure	16
Other	2
Asst/Representation	2
Lobbying	3
Financial Disclosure	1
Post-employment	1
Political Activity	5

ADVISORY OPINIONS

The commission issued 4 formal written advisory opinions in 2021. Each opinion is summarized and published on the commission's website. Published opinions can be keyword searched and read in full through the search engine available on the opinions page of the commission's website. Please note that only advisory opinions issued from 2009 or later are available on the website at this time. Earlier advisory opinions are available by request. Many informal requests and inquiries for advice are handled by the director and staff where there is sufficient precedent to provide guidance or where time does not permit consideration of the full commission. In each such case, the ethics commission subsequently reviews and retroactively approves or amends each response.

COMPLAINTS

The commission received no formal written complaints of ethics violations in 2021.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

The commission is charged with the responsibility of reviewing and making available for public inspection, each financial disclosure (FDS) and conflict of interest (COI) statement received from required County employees, elected officials, candidates for elected office, compensated and uncompensated board members, and covered volunteers. Each statement is reviewed for completeness, accuracy, and for potential conflicts of interest. In 2021 the commission received 278 disclosure statements as follows:

Regular employees and covered volunteers	263
Candidates	15

Each statement of covered filers was reviewed for completeness and potential conflicts as required by law and employee filers were directed to correct any omissions or deficiencies. All disclosure statements, including corrections and additions, are available for inspection and copying with advance notice at the commission's office as required by law. There were no late filing fees assessed in 2021.

There were 12 requests to examine/copy 12 separate disclosure filings. As required by law, all filers whose statements were examined were notified of that fact in writing. No copying charges were collected in 2021.

LOBBYING

The commission received 150 lobbying registrations from 53 lobbyists. Lobbying registrations, employer authorizations, and activity reports are public documents. The ethics commission staff received, reviewed, and compiled the statistics on 256 bi-annual activity reports. There were no late filing fees assessed. The following information summarizes the compensation and expenditures reported by registered lobbyists in 2021:

Compensation paid to lobbyists	\$298,928.04
Office expenses in addition to compensation.....	589.37
Professional and technical research and assistance.....	7,940.00
Publications or letter writing campaigns	3,810.00
Witnesses.....	0.00
Meals and beverages for county employees and their immediate families.....	0.00
Special events (parties, dinners, athletic events, entertainment, and other functions)	0.00
Food, lodging, or other expenses at a conference or meeting	0.00
Other gifts.....	0.00
Miscellaneous expenses.....	0.00

EDUCATION

2021 On-line Training Completed - 257 Employees and 33 Board and Commission Members

Training includes the use of multi-media as well as printed hand-outs and copies of the employee brochure summarizing the ethics law’s conflicts of interest provisions. The ethics commission also provides the brochure, *What employees need to know about the Public Ethics Law* to the Office of Personnel for distribution to all new employees. The brochure is also available to the public upon request.

The brochure is available on-line on the Ethics Commission website

<https://www.aacounty.org/boards-and-commissions/ethics-commission/forms-and-publications/employee-ethics-brochure.pdf>.

The commission also updates and publishes two brochures: *What You Need to Know about the Public Ethics Law- Lobbyists* and *What You Need to Know about the Public Ethics Law- Vendors and Contractors*. Both brochures are available at the ethics commission’s office and are distributed freely upon request.

In 2020, the commission, in conjunction with the Office of Information Technology, made available to all County employees and officials, an on-line Ethics Training Course to allow everyone to satisfy the mandatory ethics training requirements, at their convenience, on-line. The training course takes about an hour to complete and consists of several chapters with a few questions at the end of each chapter. Upon successful completion (score of 80% or better) employees are able to print out a Certificate of Completion. The commission also maintains an email list of County employees who successfully complete the training. Training is required by law for all employees, board and commission members, and elected officials, within 60 days of hire, appointment or taking office.

NEW FORMS

No new ethics forms were created in 2021.

BUDGET

Saving money while performing the duties assigned to the commission by the Anne Arundel County Charter has always been a priority. Use of email has largely replaced paper - the commission sends all notifications and disclosure forms to County employees by email in lieu of first-class mail. The commission also requests all disclosure filers (covered volunteers and lobbyists) to accept email notifications and to access all forms via the commission's website. Many of these filers have agreed to accept email only notifications. The anticipated budget for FY2022 is unchanged.

RECENT ETHICS LAW CHANGES

Amendment to Section 7-1-101 of the Ethics Code: Definition of "usual and customary constituent services."

The County is required to keep its local Public Ethics Law "equivalent" and "substantially similar" to the State's ethics law. In October, 2021 the commission submitted our Ethics Code to the State Ethics Commission for review which was found to be satisfactory and in compliance.

CONCLUSION

The commission schedules its regular meetings for the second Monday of each month at 4:00 p.m. in the conference room at the commission's office on an "as needed or as requested basis". Decisions on whether a physical meeting is called is made by the commission's chair. Any citizen or employee is welcome to attend the open session of the meeting or make an appointment to address the commission concerning any ethics issue. Much of the commission's work is done by email and telephone conference. Contingent meetings are also scheduled for specific dates, but are only held if specially called by the chair. The dates of all scheduled and contingent meetings are available on the ethics commission's website online.

Questions or comments about this report are welcome and may be mailed, emailed, or faxed to the ethics commission.

Respectfully submitted on February 3, 2022 by:

Anne Arundel County Ethics Commission:

Michael S. Botsaris, Esq., Executive Director

Gina Scerbo, Secretary

Dale P. Kelberman, Chair

Vanessa S. Carter, Member

Daniel J. Semick, Member

Robert J. Mansfield, Member

Solon Webb, Member

Corinne Fitzgerald, Member