



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT BOARD OF ETHICS

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July 9, 2015

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Prince George's County
Arts and Humanities Council
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Re: Reconsideration of Advisory Opinion 15-2013

Dear ██████████:


On August 28, 2014, the Board of Ethics (the "Board") reviewed your organization's request to waive the requirements of §2-294 of the Prince George's County Code of Ethics (Ethics Code). The Board considered the facts of your case and determined that your organization is a Prince George's County (County) board, commission or similar entity, and that its members are officials as defined under the Ethics Code. After further analysis, the Board declined to grant your organization an exemption under §2-294(h) of the Ethics Code.

In light of additional information you wish the Board to consider, you filed a request for reconsideration on June 5, 2015. On June 12, 2015, the Board reviewed your additional information and conducted a telephone conference with you and your organization's chairman. In order to grant an exemption under Section 2-294(h), the Board must find that application of the Section would constitute an unreasonable invasion of privacy; would significantly reduce the availability of qualified persons for public service; and would not be contrary to the Ethics Code.

Upon a review of all the information received by the Board, we are not persuaded that the basis of our prior opinion should be set aside in favor of exemption. As a body enacted pursuant to code, your organization, along with other similar boards and commissions, compose a formal system through which citizens can advise the County Executive and County Council on major issues affecting the County. In addition, your organization receives and distributes, through competitive grants programs, County funds to provide financial support to certain organizations and civic entities. Based on the role of your organization, the Board does not find that application of §2-294 would be **contrary** to the Ethics Code. Furthermore, although a number of current members of your organization may find the disclosure of financial information to be an invasion of privacy, given your organization's responsibility with respect to grants, the Board does not believe such disclosure to be an **unreasonable** invasion of privacy. Finally, and in

taking into account the population of the County and the recruitment efforts of your organization as communicated on June 12th, the Board is not convinced that application of §2-294 would **significantly** reduce the availability of qualified persons to serve on the board of your organization.

For the reasons stated herein and in Advisory Opinion 15-2013, your request for waiver is denied. The filing of financial disclosure statements serve to remind public officials and employees of their financial interests to help them avoid conflicts of interest, while at the same time promoting public confidence in the integrity of government by providing citizens with information about those who serve them.¹

Board Chair

Covette Rooney
Board Chair

¹ Although not a determining factor in our analysis, we note in this opinion as a response to a question posed by the requestor during the teleconference on June 12, 2015, that similar organizations in other jurisdictions are required to file financial disclosure statements. The Board shares the views of other ethics bodies with regard to the purpose and intent of financial disclosure requirements.