

[Advisory Opinion 1996-12]

May 30, 1996

[Name1 withheld]

Department of Public Works & Transportation

Dear [Name1 withheld]:

The Ethics Commission has considered your request of March 21, 1996 for an advisory opinion and/or waiver regarding corporate sponsorship of advertisements promoting the County's household hazardous waste collection program.

You indicate that approximately 16 times per year the Division of Solid Waste Services holds events at which County residents may deliver solvents, fuels, pesticides and other potentially hazardous household products for environmentally proper disposal. The Division has discovered that the number of residents participating in any given household hazardous waste collection correlates with the level of publicity issued for that event. You indicate that a corporate sponsor might be willing to pay for the cost of the advertisement. The Division would like to acknowledge the sponsorship in the advertisement, but will have no other contractual relationship with the sponsor. In a follow-up memorandum, you state that several businesses may be interested in forming a "sponsorship cooperative" in which each company contributes to the cost of the advertisement.

Based upon the representations contained in your correspondence, the Commission found that the public acknowledgement of corporate sponsors is permissible under the County's ethics laws. The Division may accept the financial assistance of the private businesses and may acknowledge the corporate sponsorship in the advertisements. These actions do not violate the gift provisions in Article 19A-16 of the Ethics Code. Furthermore, a waiver is not required under Article 19A-14. The mere acknowledgement of corporate sponsorship does not fall within the prohibitions set forth in Article 19A-14.

Thank you very much for your inquiry. We hope that you find this letter responsive to your request.

Very truly yours,

[signed]

Laurie B. Horvitz, Chair

LBH/jlw