



CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

Office of the City Clerk
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THE ETHICS COMMISSION FOR THE CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

c/o City Clerk, 1 East Franklin Street, Room 200, Hagerstown, MD 21740



REQUEST FOR ADVISORY OPINION

Requestor's Name: Chris Siemerling
Requestor's Department: Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED)
Requestor's Title/Position: Economic Development Specialist
Requestor's Mailing Address: 14 N. Potomac Street, Suite #200A
Hagerstown, MD, 21740

1. Description of the facts and circumstances in question (Continue on the back of this form if additional space is needed). Please attach any relevant supported documentation.

City Councilmembers are residents, business owners, entrepreneurs, and residents who may benefit from the City of Hagerstown's Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) incentive programs.

DCED administers incentive programs for the goal of inspiring and enabling significant redevelopment, both city-wide and in the urban core,

The Mayor and City Council approve the Guidelines and Application Forms and the funding for each program.

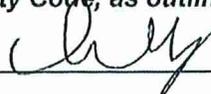
A staff Review Committee reviews and approves applications for most programs. Some smaller programs are approved by a City Staff team.

For some programs (such as the Invest Hagerstown City Center Grant), the Review Committee only recommends approval. The Mayor and City Council provides final approval.

2. Summary of the ethics issue requested to be determined (continue on back of this form if necessary):

The City of Hagerstown Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) is asking the City Ethics Commission to consider if they can provide a general opinion that can be used as a handout to a City Councilmember who asks if he/she is permitted to apply for City incentive programs administered by the department.

The undersigned Requestor, a person subject to the City of Hagerstown Code of Ethics, hereby requests an advisory opinion of The Ethics Commission for the City of Hagerstown pursuant to §33-3(b) of the City Code, as outlined above.

Signature: 

Date: 3/5/25



CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

CITY ETHICS COMMISSION

March 27, 2025

Chris Siemerling, Economic Development Specialist
Department of Community and Economic Development
City of Hagerstown
14 N. Potomac Street, Suite #200A
Hagerstown, MD 21740

RE: ADVISORY OPINION 2025-001

Dear Mr. Siemerling:

The Ethics Commission has received the Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Request for Advisory Opinion and appreciates your reaching out.

The Mayor and City Council are all generally aware of the requirements of the City's Code of Ethics. In fact, two of them have recently sought advisory opinions (and waived confidentiality), and those opinions may provide guidance for DCED and the councilmembers. We have attached both for your reference.

As a general rule, it is fair to say that the expectation of the Ethics Commission is that a councilmember will recuse himself/herself from participating in any discussion or decision regarding a grant award from which s/he (or an entity in which s/he has any interest) would benefit.

Whether a councilmember can apply for a grant which is awarded at the staff level is not as clear. That said, the best course of action if a member of the Mayor and City Council wishes to apply for any particular City incentive program, is to seek an advisory opinion before applying.

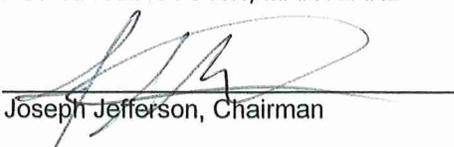
Lastly, all City staff and elected officials are reminded of the Code of Ethic's goal to avoid not just ethical violations, but even the appearance of impropriety.

Pursuant to the Ethics Commission's Rules of Procedure, Advisory Opinions are published on the City's website. However, before an Advisory opinion may be made public, the Commission shall delete: (i) the name of the person who is the subject of the opinion; and (ii) to the fullest extent possible, any other information that may identify the person.

Please let the Commission know in writing if it is your desire to keep your identity confidential or if your name may be revealed when this Advisory Opinion is published on the City's website.

Respectfully submitted,

ETHICS COMMISSION FOR THE
CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

BY: 
Joseph Jefferson, Chairman

cc – Scott Nicewarner, City Administrator
Ethics Commission Members

