



Ethics Commission Opinion 85-1

The Ethics Commission has been asked for an advisory opinion as to whether or not a member of the College Park Airport Authority, who is also a member of a flying club, ought to refrain from voting on an issue pertaining to flying clubs. The question was framed as follows:

"Is it appropriate for a member of the Airport Authority who is a member of a flying club and who owns a share of the flying club's airplane, to vote on whether a flying club should be permitted to conduct primary flight training with the possibility that revenues from the flight training might defray club expenses?"

Let it be stated at the outset that no suggestion was made or information adduced that the club member in question would be lining his pockets as a result of primary flight training being conducted by the flying club(s). However, based upon the written and oral information submitted, there was a distinct possibility that revenues to the flying clubs could result in the individual club members having to advance less money out of their own pockets to defray the expenses of operating the club's airplane.

Section 4-1B of Chapter 4 of the Ordinance of the City of College Park reads as follows:

"B. Members of the Authority shall disclose to the Authority and the Ethics Commission any conflict of interest, as that term is understood in the Maryland Common Law and the College Park Ethics Code, and shall refrain from voting or taking action on any matter concerning which that member has a potential conflict of interest, such as owning all or a portion of share of a flying club aircraft and voting or taking action in the regulation of any flying club or their aircraft that might affect that member's interest or ownership in a financial way. "Conflict of interest" shall refer to a real conflict and not to some insignificant matter such as owning stock in General Motors and voting on the purchase of a motor vehicle. Clarification and recommendations concerning doubtful situations can be requested of the City Ethics Commission."

Based upon the foregoing, it was the unanimous opinion of the college Park Ethics Commission that a potential conflict of interest existed and that the Airport Authority member should refrain from voting on the subject matter.

Eugene Blevins

Harry Grayson

Mary Hollomand

Lou A. Stengard

Robert Smaldore, Chairman

College Park Ethics Commission