

**ST. MARY’S COUNTY ETHICS COMMISSION
2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

INTRODUCTION

The St. Mary’s County Ethics Commission was established on June 29, 1982, pursuant to Article 40A of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The Commission is bound by St. Mary’s County Public Ethics Ordinance 2019-03 and operates under Ethics Commission Rules of Procedure. These documents are available for public review on the County’s Ethics Commission Website.

The Commission manages the financial disclosure process, hears complaints and renders decisions involving violations of the Ethics Ordinance, provides Advisory Opinions on the Ethics Ordinance, and offers education on the requirements and application of the Ethics Ordinance.

MEMBERS

The Ethics Commission is a volunteer commission composed of five regular voting members and one alternate member who does not vote unless a regular member is not present. The members with their position and expiration date for calendar year 2019 were:

<u>Current Members</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Appointment Date</u>	<u>Expiration Date</u>
David Willenborg	Chair	01/01/2019	12/31/2021
Joseph Russell	Co-Chair	07/01/2019	06/30/2022
John Austerman	Member	07/01/2018	07/18/2021 (resigned 10/19)
Lawrence Crabtree	Member	01/01/2017	12/31/2019
Jean-Marie Hansen	Member	07/01/2019	06/30/2022
Kathleen McClernan-Walz	Alternate	07/01/2018	06/30/2021

MEETINGS

The St. Mary’s County Ethics Commission meets quarterly in January, April, July and October. During calendar year 2019, the Ethics Commission held two additional meetings to hear requests for Advisory Opinions.

The minutes from these meetings are available for public review and are available on the Ethics Commission website.

ATTENDANCE

St. Mary’s County Ethics Commission held six meetings in 2019 with six absences.

ELECTIONS

Elections for the Chair and Vice-Chair positions are held each July. David Willenborg was elected as the Chairman and Joseph Russell, Vice Chair.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

The Ordinance establishing the St. Mary's County Ethics Commission provides that certain public officials, employees, and non-compensated volunteers in county service are required to file financial disclosure statements. The disclosure statement is used to identify and declare potential conflicts of interest before they become issues and to preserve public confidence in the integrity of county employees.

The Ethics Commission annually receives between 25-50 financial disclosure statements. In accordance with Ethics Ordinance 2012-009, the financial disclosure statements are available for public inspection. The Ordinance requires the Commission to notify any member whose financial disclosure statement is examined, providing the name and address of the person who requested the document. In 2019, there were no requests to examine statements.

COMPLAINTS AND ADVISORY OPINIONS

Advisory Opinions are issued as a result of an official written inquiry. The advisory opinion contains the original inquiry, the applicable Ethics Ordinance section, the decision of the Commission, and any other relevant information concerning the decision-making process.

In 2019, the Ethics Commission received two requests for Advisory Opinions, and two Complaints.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Ethics Commission is charged with conducting information and education programs regarding the purpose, and implementation of the Ethics Ordinance.

CONCLUSION

The St. Mary's County Ethics Commission is dedicated to serving the citizens of the County, with the utmost integrity and conviction. The Commission strives to respond to citizen requests and complaints in a timely and professional manner, and all members look forward to serving the public during the 2020 session.

Questions or comments about this report are welcome, and may be sent to the Ethics Commission via the Ethics Commission Secretary at diane.gleissner@stmarysmd.com