

## **Bainbridge Island Ethics Board**

### **Advisory Opinion 2014-01**

**Adopted April 21, 2014**

Kathy Dunn has requested the Ethics Board's opinion whether her service as a member of both the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and a "citizens roundtable" that meets informally with police officials is a conflict of interest. As set forth on its web site, the CSC "was created by and functions under the authority of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and the Bainbridge Island Municipal Code. By law, the Commission is limited to those civil service personnel matters involving Public Safety Department employees." As described by Ms. Dunn, the roundtable is intended "to bring to the attention of the Bainbridge Island Police any rumors, questions, etc. from the community or that [the members] have that need clarification" or, in other words, to facilitate communication between the police department and the citizenry.

Under Article II ("Code of Ethics"), section D of the COBI Ethics Program, the existence of a conflict of interest will bar a commission member from taking official action on a matter on behalf of the city. As defined in section D, conflicts of interest are generally financial interests, including contractual employment, a "financial or private interest," or an interest in property that would be affected by the action.

The question presented by Ms. Dunn is whether her membership on the citizens roundtable is the sort of interest that might create a conflict of interest. The answer to this question is clear: Ms. Dunn's membership on the roundtable is not a financial or private interest and, accordingly, is not a conflict of interest that might bar her under the Ethics Program from taking official action as a member of the CSC.

That said, the Ethics Board encourages Ms. Dunn to discuss with her fellow CSC members and the police officials who convene the citizens roundtable whether, for reasons other than the requirements of the Ethics Program, it is appropriate for an individual to serve on both entities.