CONNECTICUT STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
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ADVISORY OPINION NUMBER 78-23

Member of an Advisory Board

The chairwoman of a regional housing council, who serves ex officio as a member of the Central Housing Committee, is employed by a real estate development corporation which identifies and executes real estate opportunities throughout the northeastern United States. She is an officer of the corporation and advises it on private and publicly-funded housing projects. She has asked the State Ethics Commission whether there is a conflict of interest between her volunteer service for the State and her private employment.

The responsibilities of the regional housing council in each planning region and of the Central Housing Committee have been set forth in Executive Order Number 15 dated May 13, 1976. Each regional housing council is to assist local officials and consumers and producers of housing in defining and meeting housing needs under appropriate programs, to comment on existing housing grants and programs, to advocate improvements in housing programs and policies, and to provide a forum for persons concerned with housing. The chairperson of each council, appointed by the Governor for a two-year term, serves ex officio on the Central Housing Committee. This Committee maintains open communications among the councils and coordinates their efforts to improve housing in Connecticut. Chairpersons of councils and members of the Central Housing Committee receive no compensation for their services, only reimbursement for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties.

The purpose of the councils and of the Committee is to foster cooperation and communication among those involved in meeting housing needs in Connecticut. Members of the councils and of the Committee only assist, advise, consult, comment, and propose. They do not exercise the power of the State, nor have they authority to expend public funds. They receive no public funds, except reimbursement for expenses. Therefore, each is a "member of an advisory board", section 1(g), rather than a "public official", section 1(j), or "State employee", section 1(k), Public Act Number 77-600.

Not being a public official or State employee, the chairperson of a regional housing council is not subject to the provisions of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials, Public Act Number 77-600, by virtue of her service on a council or the Committee. Therefore, even though she is privately employed her activities cannot result in violations of the conflict of interest provisions of that Act.

By order of the Commission,

Thomas J. Lynch

Rev. Thomas J. Lynch
Chairman

Dated October 5, 1978