



Betsy Kraus Dawson

May 24, 1951 - August 24, 2016

Betsy Kraus Dawson, an Annapolis attorney who served for 20 years as the executive director of the Anne Arundel County Ethics Commission, died of cancer Wednesday. She was 65 years old. Emerson Davis, chairman of the ethics commission, called Dawson its "heart and soul." "I can honestly say no one worked harder to retain ethical integrity in Anne Arundel County than Betsy," he said. In her role as executive director of the commission, which rules on public ethics matters, Dawson advised the body's seven appointed members, supervised ethics training for county employees and maintained a list of registered lobbyists in the county. Though she frequently interacted with high-powered politicians and lobbyists, she preferred to stay out of the spotlight, acting instead as a behind-the-scenes advocate for good government. "The least she had to be out in front of it, the better she liked it," Davis said. "I don't think she ever wanted to be the focal point. She just wanted to do what she felt was right on behalf of Anne Arundel County." Which meant, according to daughter Anne Dawson, holding officials accountable to her favorite quote: "There's no such thing as a free lunch." Dawson, the daughter of Dr. Bertram S. Kraus, an anthropologist and college professor, and Dorothy Kraus, a homemaker who also worked as a secretary and in real estate, was born on May 24, 1951 in Tucson, Arizona. She spent parts of her childhood in Seattle, where her father worked at the University of Washington, and later in Pittsburgh, when Kraus took a job as a professor at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Pennsylvania. She

graduated from the University of Pittsburgh and later earned her law degree from the Case-Western Reserve School of Law. Dawson first came to Annapolis to work at her sister's public relations firm. After law school, she took a job clerking for Anne Arundel County Circuit Court Judge James Wray. It was there that she met her husband, Ron Dawson, who was a clerk for Circuit Court Judge Morris Turk. The couple married in 1978 and had four children. After working at the Anne Arundel County Office of Law, Dawson spent 13 years focused on raising her kids. Nan Jarashow, a longtime friend and neighbor, remembered the camaraderie the two shared as mothers who "enjoyed being dinosaurs at a time when there were just starting to be not too many moms hanging around." Jarashow said Dawson had "a great sense of humor and a warmth that really drew people in and put them at their ease." In her free time, Dawson enjoyed crabbing — an activity in which she avidly partook most Sunday mornings with her family. The ritual was often followed by a Sunday evening crab feast. She was also a connoisseur of good tequila, said sister Kathy Sitte, and had a collection of shot glasses that outgrew the cabinet where they were stored. Dawson was active in the community, singing in the Annapolis Chorale and helping to raise money for a playground at the then-Germantown Elementary School in Annapolis. In the late 1980s, she led a successful campaign to stop the county from selling Quiet Waters Farm in Annapolis to developers. The land is now the public Quiet Waters Park. Anne Arundel County officials on Wednesday praised Dawson's dedication to the county. County spokesman Owen McEvoy called her "a devoted public servant dedicated to ethical and open government." "Betsy helped really create the framework for a strong ethics commission in the county," said former County Executive Janet Owens, a Democrat who served from 1998 to 2006. Though she and Dawson sometimes disagreed, "she was totally dedicated and committed to making sure that things were done properly at the local level," Owens said. Councilman Chris Trumbauer, an Annapolis Democrat, said Dawson's institutional knowledge was important to guide a commission that sees frequent turnover. "I hope that her legacy is continued,"

he said. Dawson is survived by her husband, Ron Dawson, daughters Anne and Kate, sons Jack and Jeffrey, sister Kathy Sitte, daughter-in-law Michelle Dawson, grand-daughter Lydia Dawson and several nieces and nephews. Her parents preceded her in death. Dawson's funeral arrangements are being handled by Simplicity Cremation and Funeral Services in Glen Burnie. Instead of flowers, donations may be made to the Dr. Bertram S. and Dorothy S. Kraus Memorial Scholarship at Anne Arundel Community College. By Amanda Yeager Contact Reporter As published in the "The Capital News Paper" Annapolis, MD. August 24, 2016

Tribute Wall



“ *Betsy Kraus Dawson*

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