

Green buildings highlight last council session before change

■ New council will have four new members and get a \$5,000 raise

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The County Council will begin next month without four veteran councilmen.

At-large Councilmen Steven A. Silverman (D) of Silver Spring and Michael L. Rubin (D) of Gaithersburg will be succeeded by Takoma Park City Councilman Marc Elrich (D) and social worker Duchy Trachtenberg (D). Energy lawyer Roger Berliner (D) takes over for Howard A. Denis (R-Dist. 1) of Chevy Chase, and school board member Valerie Ervin (D) of Silver Spring succeeds Thomas E. Perez (D-Dist. 5) of Takoma Park.

The incoming council will receive a pay raise when their four-year terms begin in two weeks. Salaries for the eight council members will increase \$5,000 to \$84,721 a year, and the council president will receive an additional 10 percent raise. The council will receive another \$5,000 bonus in December 2007.

Before saying its goodbyes, the sitting council will end its tenure with a vote Nov. 28 on a green building statute proposed by Council President George L. Leventhal (D-At large) of Takoma Park.

The statute would require new buildings larger than 10,000 square feet to meet national green standards, known as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. An office building of 10,000 square feet has room for about 20 workers.

"The industry is moving in this direction and it's important that government provide a gentle nudge to help further these environmental laws," Leventhal said.

Montgomery's legislation is similar to laws being considered by the D.C. City Council. As submitted, the county would allow builders of private buildings one year to implement the requirements and two years for a public building. The law in D.C. would require commercial and city-funded residential buildings to meet the standards by 2012.

Since Leventhal's proposal was introduced this summer, developers have criticized it as burdensome.

Mike Bell, a homebuilder and member of the Maryland-National Capital Building Industry Association, argues that complying with the green statutes should be voluntary, not mandatory, and that the space requirement should be raised to 20,000 square feet to lessen the compliance costs.

"There are upfront costs, but in the end you capture back substantial savings in preserving the environment, higher employee morale and an increase in building value," Leventhal said.

Environmental organizations have said that the law, with its preference for wooden building materials, could hurt trees in certain forests,

TOWN MEETINGS

Meetings set for next week with County Executive-elect Isiah Leggett:

■ 7:30 p.m. Nov. 28, Leland Community Center, 4301 Willow Lane, Chevy Chase

■ 7:30 p.m. Nov. 29, Olney Elementary School, 3401 Queen Mary Drive

■ 7:30 p.m. Nov. 30, BlackRock Center for the Arts, 12901 Town Common Drive, Germantown

could lead to a decline in the state's logging industry. Both the American Forest Foundation and the Forest Resources Association have asked the council reconsider that requirement.

Next week's vote follows an announcement by Leventhal and County Executive Douglas M. Duncan (D) last week of another environmentally friendly program, which would allow residents to buy energy from renewable sources such as the sun and wind.

Under the plan, consumers would purchase clean energy — which costs about \$20 more per month than existing energy sources — to heat and cool their homes and businesses. To offset the additional expense, they would be reimbursed about 40 percent of the costs through the county's Clean Energy Rewards program.

Residents may sign up for the program by visiting www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cleanenergyrewards.

In other council news

•Council seeks new communications director: Applicants interested in the council's legislative information officer position being vacated by Patrick Laceyfield should submit resumes by Dec. 1. Duties include preparing news statements and editorial pieces and overseeing the council's Web site and cable television operations.

Laceyfield resigned to become chief spokesman for County Executive-elect Isiah "Ike" Leggett (D).

•Swearing in county officials: The ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. Dec. 4 in the Music Center at Strathmore at 5301 Tuckerman Lane in North Bethesda. Parking will be available at the County Conference Center at 5701 Marinell Road, with shuttles operating between the two sites.

•First session with new council: The council will elect a new president and vice president for a one-year term on Dec. 5. The president also will announce committee assignments that day.