

MONTGOMERY

Farmers endorse attorney

Former planning board counsel is choice for head of same commission

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GAITHERSBURG — Montgomery County farmers want a former planning board attorney named the next chairwoman of that commission, and they do not want the appointment to go to past chairman Royce Hanson.

The Montgomery County Farm Bureau Inc. sent a letter to County Council President George L. Leventhal on Friday stating its endorsement of Michele Rosenfeld.

Ms. Rosenfeld quit her position as legal counsel to the planning board in April, after holding the post for almost 17 years.

In her letter of application for the chairmanship, Ms. Rosenfeld said she resigned from the lead attorney position because Commission's General Counsel Adrian Gardner and Executive Director Trudye Johnson limited her ability to advise the planning board.

Farm Bureau President George Lechliden said his board

Attorney

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represents more than 2,400 members. Board members do not want to see the former board chairman appointed because they disagree with some of his public policy decisions written in a memo dated Feb. 6.

Mr. Lechliden said Mr. Hanson, who advised the County Council in the matter of the Clarksburg zoning failure, wants to do away with child lots and sand mounds. That would preclude building houses for families with children.

Mr. Lechliden said the planning

board members do not understand farming.

"They have no background in agriculture," Mr. Lechliden said. "They just don't grasp it, and they don't care to know anything about agriculture."

He said Ms. Rosenfeld "hasn't done anything in particular for or against us. She was following what was written in the law, and she quit because of the way they were doing things and the board didn't take her advice."

Montgomery County has more than 93,000 acres devoted to agricul-

ture and an active farm community that is important to the economy of Montgomery County, Mr. Lechliden said.

"We are at a critical point in determining the future economics of agriculture in Montgomery County," he said.

Mr. Lechliden said the new chair should be a non-political, impartial and fair-minded person.

Ms. Rosenfeld stated, in her application, the importance of "an apolitical candidate who has a greater loyalty to the agency than to his or her own political ambitions

and can do what must be done to right the agency. I am that candidate."

Mr. Leventhal said interviews of all the candidates will be completed today, and community groups will then have an opportunity to meet with applicants.

He said the council will make the decision in July.

The current chairman, Derick Berlage, who originally applied for a second term, withdrew his name as the controversy and criticism over violations in the Clarksburg Town Center development continued.