

With a week to go, Hanson looks good for top planning post

■ **Veteran planner and architect of Agricultural Reserve would return to agency he left a quarter of a century ago if appointed**

BY MARGIE HYSLOP
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Twenty-five years after Royce Hanson left the county Planning Board, he appears poised for a second go as its chairman.

The County Council, which oversees the board, is expected to vote formally on July 25, but this week three council members named Hanson as their favorite candidate to take over the troubled agency.

Steven A. Silverman, Nancy M. Floreen and Phillip M. Andrews are all on the record backing Hanson among the nine candidates the council interviewed for the \$150,000-a-year job.

Last year, the council recruited Hanson, who led the board from 1972 through 1981, to advise it on correcting problems found at the agency after residents uncovered hundreds of building height and setback violations at Clarksburg Town Center.

Andrews (D-Dist. 3) of Gaithersburg added his name to the list of Hanson backers after Silverman (D-At Large) of Silver

Spring said Monday that he will vote for Hanson's appointment next week.

Floreen (D-At Large) of Garrett Park has long supported Hanson; she and Silverman singled him out in interviews with The Gazette more than a month ago.

Silverman, who is running for county executive, and Floreen have been criticized by slow-growth advocates, who see Andrews as an ally.

Council President George L. Leventhal (D-At Large) of Takoma Park declined to say whom he would support, but said he had "a sense of where the council is going."

Hanson is director of the Center for Washington Area Studies at The George Washington University.

A nationally respected planning expert, Hanson is credited as architect of the county's Agricultural Reserve.

Councilman Michael J. Knapp (D-Dist. 2) of Germantown said Hanson is "a leading candidate, if not the leading candidate," although Knapp said he is not sure if he will support Hanson at next week's vote.

Councilman Howard A. Denis (R-Dist. 1) of Chevy Chase agreed that Hanson is probably among the top contenders on most lists, but said he is still making up his mind as constituents continue to send-in their comments.

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County Councilman Michael L. Subin (D-At Large) of Gaithersburg

A look through the correspondence file at the council's offices shows a preponderance of e-mails and letters backing Hanson's appointment.

Councilwoman Marilyn J. Praisner (D-Dist. 4) of Calverton said she has narrowed her choices to two applicants but wants answers to a couple of questions.

Councilman Michael L. Subin said he believes he is in the minority because he thinks the Planning Board chairman should be a "fresh face (who) is able to take an absolutely unbiased view of what is happening in the depths of the organization."

"The largest issue facing that organization is ... the budget is insufficient and there are not enough people there," said Subin (D-At Large) of Gaithersburg.

And that, he said, is the council's and the county executive's fault.

Hanson holds a law degree and doctorate in government and public administration from The American University and lives in Montgomery Village.

If appointed, Hanson would succeed Derick P. Berlage, whose four-year tenure as chairman fell victim to the Clarksburg scandal. Berlage, a former county councilman, withdrew his bid for reappointment in May.

On Monday, Berlage sent the council a report, noting that the agency has implemented 45 reforms and is working on 34 more to correct problems discovered in the aftermath of the Clarksburg revelations.

Key among the reforms is that the agency now posts information on every development application on its Web site and is working to post even more to allow residents to track a project from start to finish. Also, public notice is now required for requests to change a project that has been approved, and developers must hold meetings with the community at the beginning of the process.



Andrews



Floreen



Silverman