

EXAMINER
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Council picks Hanson to lead Montgomery's Planning Board

Member: 'This is the most important appointment ... the County Council can make'

By Courtney Mabeus
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The Montgomery County Council overwhelmingly Tuesday chose a 1970s-era Planning Board chairman to again take over what is considered one of the county's most powerful jobs.

The Council voted 8-1 to approve Royce Hanson, 74, who chaired the board from 1972 until 1981. He has recently been an adviser to the Planning Board, which has been the subject of much countywide criticism in recent months as the scandal over the Clarksburg development

Hanson was one of nine candidates interviewed for the job. He will earn \$150,000 annually for a four-year term, although it is unclear when he will start. County Executive Doug Duncan has 30 days to sign the resolution.

"This is the most important appointment, arguably, that the County Council can make," Council Member Tom Perez said.

Hanson, who lives in Montgomery Village, oversaw the Board during a time of major development in the county, which is one of the wealthiest in the nation. During his tenure, Hanson put in place the county's first comprehensive growth management plan and established the Agricultural Reserve.

Hanson did not attend Tuesday's meeting and could not be reached for this story. He currently is a research professor at The George Washington University. He earned a bachelor's degree from the Univer-

sity of Central Oklahoma and master's, doctorate and law degrees from American University.

Michael Subin was the lone council member who did not support Hanson, instead nominating David Gardner for the job. Subin said he wanted someone with experience but with "no preconceived notions" about what the board should be.

Planning Board Chairman Derick Berlage took himself out of consideration for the position in May. During his term, allegations arose that board members approved numerous code violations in Clarksburg Town Center projects behind closed doors.

Council Member Nancy Floreen said the board needed a "stabilizing force."

"I do think it's time for change and I do think it's time to go back to the future," Floreen said. "I think he'll be a stabilizing force."

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