

Corzine picks Morrissy for board

By John Zucal
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Two familiar names soon could have a say in planning matters throughout New Jersey after they were nominated to the State Planning Commission.

Mayor Robert Bowser of East Orange and Patrick Morrissy, executive director of Housing and Neighborhood Development Services in Orange, were nominated to the 17-member board by Gov. Jon Corzine. Their nominations, as well as three others for the board, were announced Jan. 25 in a press release by the governor's office.

The State Planning Commission is a 17-member panel which meets once a month. It coordinates state redevelopment and redevelopment policies with 11 state agencies.

If approved by the Senate, Bowser would serve as one of four members of local governments on the board. Morrissy would become one of six public members on the panel, which includes seven members of the state government.

Bowser would present a long background to the commission. He served as a planner for the Newark Planning Board, traffic engineer in Montclair and director of East Orange's public-works department.

Bowser, who is in his 10th year as East Orange's mayor, said he, like Morrissy, can bring "an urban perspective" to the commission.

"The cities are where the action is. There are jobs, infrastructure that's in place, cultural centers," said Bowser. "We are trying to project a picture of growth that can be sustainable. You don't want to establish a policy that can have a negative impact on the cities."

Morrissy, a South Orange resident, has served HANDS as it expands to aid in the redevelopment of the Valley section of Orange. This includes restoring long-dormant commercial buildings with an eye toward a combination of residential and commercial uses.

"Smart growth planning is perhaps one of the most critical issues in New Jersey," said Morrissy, who claims more than three decades of experience in urban planning. "It will not work if we don't have effective urban revitalization and redevelopment. I hope to be a voice for urban communities on the State Planning Commission."

Morrissy said the recommendation of him to the commission was made by Assemblyman John McKeon of West Orange, who represents Orange in the 27th Legislative District, and the organizations NJ Futures and the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey.

While Morrissy said he wants to be an "advocate" for urban planning issues, his position on the board of the National Housing Institute in New Jersey has exposed him to problems outside the cities.

"There are two big issues we face: stopping suburban sprawl and making development happen in the most logical areas," said Morrissy. "Concerning suburban sprawl, we do have to consider preserving open space and respecting our natural resources."

The nominations are pending the approval of the state Senate. A date for a vote has not been scheduled. Morrissy said he, like most potential members of state boards, had received a request for personal information. That information would be reviewed prior to the Senate president, Richard Codey, calling the nomination to a vote.