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NEWS

Longtime F.C. Council Member Daniel X. Sze Dies of Cancer at 69

July 30, 2020 12:00 PM by [Nicholas F. Benton](#)



DAN SZE served two terms on the Falls Church City Council, one from 2006 – 2010 and the second from 2013 until his death this past week. (Photo: Courtesy Phil Duncan)

The highly-regarded Falls Church City Councilman Dan Sze died Monday night after a battle with esophageal cancer. Sze served on the Falls Church City Council from 2006 – 2010, and from 2013 to his passing this week.

Sze, 69, last attended a Council meeting, virtually, on July 13, when he reported himself present but exited the meeting early. It was first publicly announced that he was battling cancer by Mayor David Tarter at the July 20 City Council meeting when he was absent.

The American flag at the Falls Church City Hall is being flown at half mast for the next week, City Manager Wyatt Shields announced in reporting Sze's death to the City staff. Shields' statement to the City staff read as follows:

"I am sorry to share with you that City Council Member Daniel 'Dan' X. Sze died last night, after a battle with cancer. All those who worked with him will miss his keen intelligence, his hearty greetings, and the jovial conversations they shared with Dan.

"Mr. Sze was a strong leader for environmental stewardship in his service on the City Council and on regional and statewide policy boards. He led the City policy that all new or renovated City facilities must achieve LEED standards, and he strongly supported the new high school design for net zero carbon emissions.

"He encouraged City staff to push the envelope in all areas relating to sustainability — including moving the City fleet to biofuels, installing LED streetlights, and purchasing renewable electricity. He was well known for pushing private developers on green roofs, stormwater detention, and higher LEED standards in new buildings in the City. With wit and good humor (and occasional irascibility) he tirelessly advocated for the City and region to use new technologies to improve the environment and people's lives."

The City Code provides for the appointment by the Council of a temporary replacement until the term is up, which will be following the election of November 2021.

Statements honoring Sze from his colleagues on the City Council included one from Phil Duncan, who wrote Tuesday, "Even though I knew the bad news about Dan Sze was coming soon, it's still a stunner, to lose an old friend, my congenial 'next-door-neighbor' on the dais in chambers, and a valuable contributor on the environment, economic development, and so many other issues."

Duncan continued, "Dan was a smart and principled public servant, and a bold and visionary political leader who made a lasting mark for good in our City, our region, and our Commonwealth. Every couple of months, Dan and I would meet for lunch to banter about the state of affairs in the City and strategize about how to move Falls Church forward. Those get-togethers were always so energizing, and so fun. I will so miss them."

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Councilman David Snyder issued a statement as follows: "Dan was an effective advocate for environmental progress at the local and regional levels. I know of no one with whom I have served that accomplished more for our city and region."

Hal Lippman, president of the Citizens for a Better City, and Sally Ekfelt the organization's communications director, issued a statement on behalf of that organization's executive committee and membership which said, "(We) have lost an esteemed colleague and true friend with the passing of City Councilman Dan Sze. Dan served on the Executive Committee in recent years and ran under the CBC banner when first elected to the Council in 2006. He was a dedicated and engaged civic activist who embodied the principles of our organization and cared deeply about our community. Like so many others in our Little City, we keenly feel his loss and will cherish his memory."

Bob Young, chair of the City's Economic Development Authority, wrote, "I will always remember Dan as a fierce warrior for the environment and for sustainability in the Little City. He was a wonderful and loyal friend who never hesitated to challenge my conventional thinking and the status quo. I will miss him. Greatly."

Sze's first position in the City government was as vice chair of the Economic Development Authority from 2002 through 2006. He was then elected to City Council from 2006 – 2010 at which time he did not seek re-election.

In 2013 he was appointed to the Board of Zoning Appeals, then chose to run again and was re-elected in November 2013 and rejoined City Council in January 2014.

He most recently served as the City Council Liaison to the Environmental Sustainability Council and the Urban Forestry Commission, and was chair of the Council's Appointments Committee.

He served as a City of Falls Church Council representative on a number of regional boards and commissions, including as Chair of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee, as a member of the MWCOG Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee, as Chair of the Virginia Municipal League's State Committee on Environmental Quality, and as an alternate for the Northern Virginia Regional Commission.

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Sze had an accomplished career that included federal government service as reported in last week's *News-Press*.

He was responsible for major policy and regulatory initiatives under six American presidents.

At his last assignment, Sze was with the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) as Deputy Director of State Energy Programs.

After leaving full-time employment, Sze regularly lectured on sustainability strategies. He also worked on clean energy initiatives, was involved with several international start-ups and was a consultant to businesses, organizations and government.

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