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Joe Egan, 74, ran Parking Authority& other city agencies

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WHEN FRANK L. Rizzo collapsed and died of a heart attack on July 16, 1991, in the midst of his campaign for mayor as a maverick Republican, the city GOP faced a dilemma.

Boss William A. Meehan hadn't wanted Rizzo in the first place. Rizzo, the former mayor and police commissioner, beat the party's candidate, Ronald D. Castille, in the May primary that year.

Castille, now chief justice of Pennsylvania, still seemed the most likely candidate to succeed Rizzo. Joseph R. Rizzo, Frank's brother and former fire commissioner, said he was available.

Then there was Sam Katz, wealthy businessman who had come in third in that primary behind Rizzo and Castille.

But the party had another idea: Take Joseph M. Egan Jr. off his run for city councilman at-large, run him for mayor, and replace him in the City Council race with Frank Rizzo's son, Franny.

Voila! Problem solved.

There was just one flaw in the reasoning: Joe Egan, despite being a longtime economic-development figure in the city and a man with a reputation as an honest hard-worker in the city's interests, had no chance against Democrat Edward G. Rendell.

He was hardly known to the average voter. The campaign's mantra became "Joe who?"

He lost to Rendell by a 2-1 margin.

Joe Egan, who was a key figure behind some important projects in the city, such as the Pennsylvania Convention Center, Four Seasons Hotel on the Parkway and Independence Mall, and former executive director of the Philadelphia Parking Authority, died Friday of

pancreatic cancer.

He was 74 and lived in Holland, Bucks Couty.

Rendell, the sports fan governor, likened him to a utility baseball player:

"But not because he didn't have the talent to be a starter. It was because he was talented at so many things and so willing to serve."

A native Philadelphian, Joe graduated from North Catholic High School in 1952. He later took courses at Temple University.

After working some factory jobs in his youth, he was drafted into the Army in 1954. When he left the service, he worked in real estate. He married Patricia Saring in 1959.

In 1964, he saw an ad for a job with the Redevelopment Authority. That was the beginning of his service with the city.

He was deputy commerce director in the 1970s under then-Democratic Mayor Rizzo. He later became president of the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corp., and then executive director of the Parking Authority.

A longtime Democrat, he switched parties in 1989.

Joe was fiercely supportive of the Parking Authority and in 2003 dashed off a letter to the *Daily News* in response to an editorial that said the agency wreaked of the "stinky fumes of patronage."

On the job just two months, Joe said he had arrived at an agency with a "dedicated professional staff committed to managing the city's parking and transportation system to support economic development.

"While surely not perfect and not immune from political influence, the authority works diligently to improve parking opportunities and perform our duties in a consistent and efficient manner. And we will get better."

In 1991, Joe was described in a *Daily News* piece as, "Slick, with a touch of rowhouse grit."

He was on the board of the Foundation for Melanoma Research, founded by his niece, Noreen O'Neill, who later died of the disease.

Besides his wife, he is survived by three sons, Joseph, Patrick and David; two sisters, Marie and Eleanor; a brother, Francis, and three grandchildren.

Services: Funeral Mass noon Wednesday at St. Bede the Venerable Church, 1071 Holland Road, Holland. Contributions may be made to the Fox Chase Cancer Center, 333 Cottman Ave., Philadelphia PA 19111. *

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