

Chester Township Man Will Depart N.J. Position

Ex-mayor Spinelli has served as director of Smart Growth

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CHESTER TWP. -- Benjamin Spinelli will step down this month from his post as director of New Jersey's Office of Smart Growth, a division of the state Department of Community Affairs.

Effective June 1, Spinelli, a former Chester Township mayor and member of the New Jersey Highlands Council, will resign his post to become director of the Westchester Land Trust in Westchester County, N.Y.

Spinelli became director of the DCA in 2007, and has worked to complete the state's final draft master plan, which still requires the public and governor's approval.

"That really is the biggest challenge the DCA faces right now," Spinelli said. "New Jersey is such a diverse state with very serious and complex planning issues. It's an important task to resolve municipalities' infrastructure, affordable housing and environmental protection needs and to bring all the state agencies to the table to put together a sound plan for the future."

A successor has not yet been named, and the DCA is "in the process of discussing what available options there are given the state's financial situation," said Lisa Ryan, a department spokeswoman.

Spinelli, a 20-year-resident, said he will likely relocate to Westchester with his wife Jackie, who heads the Chester Food Pantry and senior transportation service, and two sons.

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