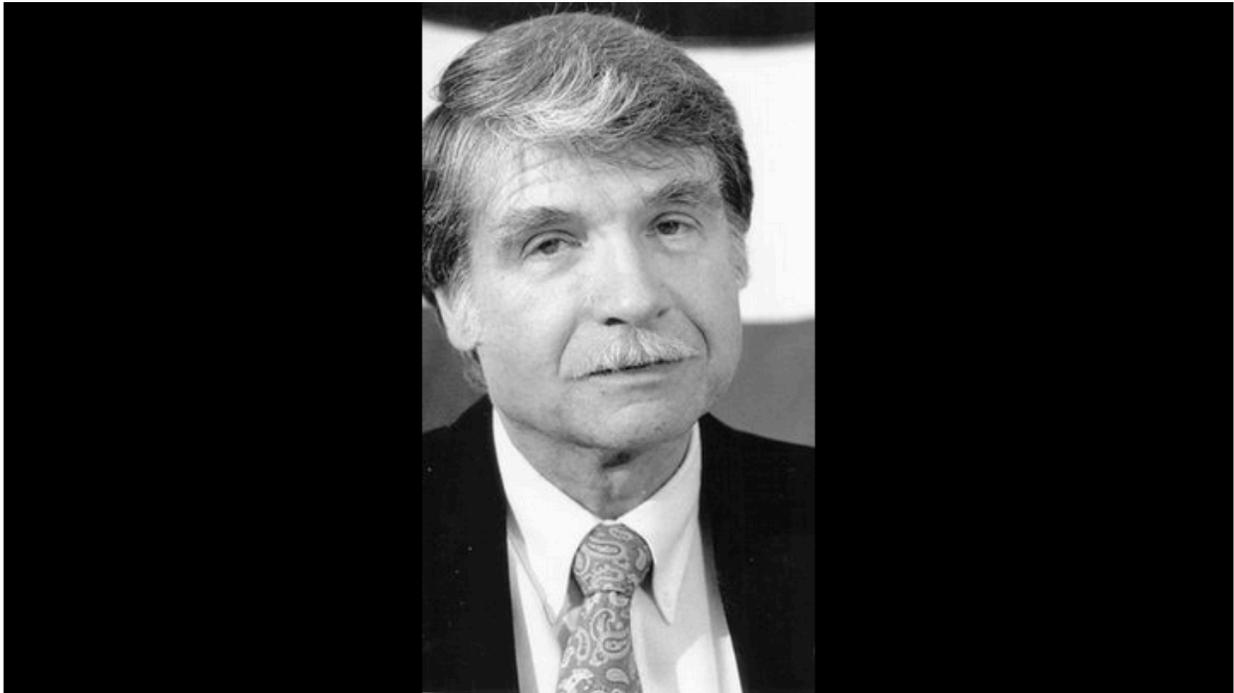


THE MORNING CALL

Benjamin Howells, former Allentown councilman, dies at age 86



Benjamin F. Howells, former member of Allentown City Council, died Tuesday. He was 86. (FILE PHOTO/THE MORNING CALL)

By **Emily Opilo and Frank Warner** · **Contact Reporters**
Of The Morning Call

Benjamin Howells, an Allentown councilman for nearly two decades, died Tuesday afternoon at his city home. He was 86.

Howells, a Democrat, was a fixture on Allentown City Council from 1973 to 1992, when he was an advocate for the city's land-value tax and helped to write the city's Historic Preservation District ordinance. Howells served two separate terms as council president.

"He was a Renaissance man," his daughter Leslie Howells of Seattle said Friday. "He was a man of lifelong curiosity and service, and a kind man."

At the same time he held public office, Howells worked at AT&T Bell Laboratories in Allentown. He retired from Bell Labs in 1990 as a senior technician.

In August 1992, Howells left City Council after his fifth consecutive term to take a job as city planner under Democratic Mayor Joseph Daddona's administration. Critics claimed Howells took the job to boost his city pension but Howells dismissed the idea. He was removed from the post in April 1994 by Republican Mayor Bill Heydt.

Howells was a member of the Pennsylvania League of Cities for 17 years, serving terms as treasurer and vice president. He was also a member of the National League of Cities. Howells served at least 12 years on the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and four years on the city Planning Commission.

He was active with what is now the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Allentown Redevelopment Authority, the Allentown Housing Authority and the Allentown Economic Development Corp. He also was a member of the Schalkenbach Foundation, a tax reform think tank in New York City.

In 1999, Howells made a failed bid for Lehigh County commissioner, running on a platform that was critical of what he called a reliance on a "good-old-boy network."

Born in upstate New York, Howells moved with his family and grew up in the Nanticoke and Wilkes-Barre area of Luzerne County. According to his daughter Leslie, he obtained a pilot's license when he was 16, before he had a driver's license.

He was a graduate of Nanticoke High School and Penn State University. He served a short time in the Army in the early 1950s.

Howells is survived by his wife of 59 years, Ellen (Morris) Howells; three children, Allen, Leslie and Sarah; and four grandchildren.

Funeral services will be private. A public memorial service is planned, but no date has been chosen. Information on the memorial service will be available from the family at lesliehowells@gmail.com.

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