



Yokoyama was called 'a strong defender of the coast.'

Yokoyama loses position on Coastal Commission

By JOHN ROBINSON
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SANTA CRUZ — City Councilwoman Jane Yokoyama is no longer on the state Coastal Commission after Assembly Speaker Willie Brown declined to appoint her to a second term last month.

Yokoyama was a strong advocate for environmental protection, and her departure leaves a vacancy which will determine whether the commission majority leans toward development or conservation.

"Jane was an extremely good commissioner and a strong defender of the coast," said Sara Wan, vice chair of the League for Coastal Protection, a commission watchdog group. "We're very disturbed

by the fact she wasn't reappointed."

Such reappointments are usually routine, Wan said.

Brown gave no reason for not reappointing Yokoyama, and sent only a brief letter thanking her for her service. He has not called, nor has Yokoyama spoken with Brown. In fact, she hasn't spoken with Brown since she was appointed in December 1991.

"I don't know why I wasn't reappointed," Yokoyama said. "You serve at his discretion."

The seat will remain vacant until Brown appoints a new commissioner. By law, the appointment must be a elected official from a Central Coast area government

that includes city council members, mayors and county supervisors.

Darolyn Davis, press secretary for Brown, said the speaker bears Yokoyama no animosity.

"He has decided to give someone else an opportunity," Davis said. "She served her appointment."

It will be at least two weeks before the position is filled and Davis said she does not know if anyone in particular is under consideration.

The Coastal Commission has far-reaching power over development in roughly a five-mile-wide swath stretching from Tijuana to Oregon. Single decisions by the board may

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affect business transactions worth millions of dollars as well as the environment.

With Yokoyama on the board, the commissioners were generally split 6-6 over controversial development issues, environmental groups said. With Yokoyama gone, the generally more pro-development commissioners now hold a 6-5 majority. That majority could be increased if Brown appoints a pro-development commissioner — something he has done in the past, including his last appointment, Diana Doo, a Beverly Hills real estate agent.

Doo replaced another Brown appointee, Beverly Hills real-estate agent Mark Nathanson, who was convicted in 1993 of extortion and racketeering and sentenced to prison.

Yokoyama consistently voted for greater public access to beaches and protection of sensitive environmental areas. The League for Coastal Protection, which compiles an annual rating of commissioners based upon their votes, rated her the second highest in terms of pro-conservation votes, behind only Madelyn Glickfield of Malibu.

"She was the swing vote," Wan said. "With Jane gone, it leaves a 6-5 commission, which is very dangerous. If Brown doesn't appoint

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someone who is pro-conservation, we will literally have a disaster on the coast of California."

Yokoyama's style on the commission was described as that of a "loner" who had few exchanges with the public.

"She sort of kept to herself, which was a good and a bad point," said Wan, who attends every meeting. "She didn't really want to talk with members of the public, which made her votes very independent."

Whether Brown wanted to change the balance of the commission will be shown by whom he appoints, Wan said. Other Brown appointees have a history of keeping in close contact with the speaker — and in some cases raising large amounts of money for his campaign. Nathanson, for one,

raised big money for Brown. Doo was a fund-raiser prior to her appointment.

Davis said Yokoyama's lack of involvement with Brown's fund-raising efforts "was not part of his decision."

Yokoyama said Brown never told her how to vote on any issue and allowed her independence.

For her time on the commission, which was unpaid, Yokoyama said she gained a deeper understanding of the issues and an appreciation for the amount of work the commission does.

"It was a real challenging position," Yokoyama said. "The issues are real important for a state like California and the future of our environment. ... I was able to bring a local voice (to the commission) and make a difference on how the issues were perceived."