

# Rawlings lived to see school budget reckoning

**T**HIS PAST Wednesday Mayor Martin O'Malley stood behind a lectern at the school headquarters on North Avenue, facing television cameras as he talked about budget crises, bad math and the need for accountability.

"The math scores of our first- and second-graders have improved," O'Malley said, "but many of us adults have not improved our own math."

O'Malley was referring to those adults who have been abusing city school finances for years and have finally run up a budget deficit of \$52 million. The day of reckoning had finally come — a "painful" but "necessary" one, according to O'Malley — as the announcement that 1,000 layoffs were possible and some strict belt-tightening in the school system is a certainty.

Just two days later, O'Malley faced television cameras again, as he paid homage to a man with two degrees in mathematics who made it his personal and political business to hold the folks at North Avenue accountable for their bad arithmetic.

Del. Howard "Pete" Rawlings



**GREGORY  
KANE**

died yesterday morning after holding cancer at bay for more than five years. According to an official family bio of Rawlings, he earned a bachelor's degree in math from Morgan State and a master's in the subject from the University of Wisconsin.

It may have been Rawlings' passion for math that led to his devotion to education, particularly his zeal for holding the folks who run Baltimore's school system accountable for all those dollars Maryland taxpayers pour into the city. That he died just two days after steps were finally taken to make school headquarters accountable for tax dollars is either quirky irony or cosmic justice. But many feel Rawlings' death leaves a void.

"This is a sad day for the people of Baltimore," said O'Malley, flanked by city and state legislators in the Ceremonial Room of City Hall. "Baltimore has lost a real giant of a man, and I've lost a close personal friend."

"He was a giant among giants," said state Sen. Verna Jones, who stood beside O'Malley with a who's who of city and state legislators including, among others, Sen. Nathaniel McFadden, City Council President Sheila Dixon, Councilmen Keiffer Mitchell, Bernard Young, Kwame .

[See Kane, 4B]

# Delegate lived to see budget reckoning

[Kane, from Page 1B]

Abayomi, Robert Curran and Del. Talmadge Branch.

"He brought more resources to Baltimore, and he commanded respect from everyone he came in contact with," Jones said. "And it wasn't about him commanding respect with a stick. It was about his actions. He was a man who exemplified hard work, integrity and follow-through."

Rawlings demonstrated that integrity in 1999, when he subjected himself to slings, arrows, invective and ad hominem attacks for supporting O'Malley in the mayor's race against two black candidates. That took guts. O'Malley alluded to it in his speech yesterday.

"When you believe that what you're doing is in the best interests of the people," the mayor said of one of Rawlings' bedrock principles, "you should never waver, even if it's unpopular to do so."

That integrity deserted Rawlings only once, during last year's state senatorial election that pitted then-Del. Lisa Gladden — who had Rawlings' support — against incumbent Sen. Barbara Hoffman.

Rawlings engaged in some uncharacteristic race-baiting, and few people called him on it. But the thinking may have been why, with so much that Rawlings has brought to the city, should folks

## GREGORY KANE

condemn him for one election-year gaffe? The bottom line was that Rawlings was the guy who time and again called for an accounting of our bucks.

Rawlings, who served as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, cared not that some saw him as the Darth Vader of state and city politics. Excoriated for supporting O'Malley, Rawlings probably made more enemies when he insisted that even his alma mater, Morgan State, explain what was done with state dollars spent on the school.

"He was very exacting about accountability," O'Malley said.

It must have been the math major in him.

Jill Carter, the 41st District delegate elected last year, liked several things about Rawlings, including his high dudgeon when he believed there was funny business going on with taxpayers' money.

"But in this budget crisis of millions of dollars squandered," Carter asked, "who else is going to do that?"

The question was put to O'Malley at yesterday's news conference.

"Everyone in this room you see before you," Hizzoner answered.