

The namesake secret

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Annapolis — Governor Mandel issued a proclamation yesterday with such stealth and surprise that his two other Board of Public Works members had to make it official by signing right on the podium.

"If I had known about it in advance, I would have two words to say about it: 'I object,'" declared William S. James, the 59-year-old Harford county Democrat who has headed the Maryland Senate for 11 years.

But it was too late to do anything about it. There were the bronze plaques with the words already inscribed freshly unveiled right behind him.

"I'm going to cry later," Mr. James added.

He had not known about it. But then neither had those two Mandel administration insiders. Louis L. Goldstein, the state comptroller, the former Gov. J. Millard Tawes, the state treasurer, who had to sign the proclamation during the dedication ceremony itself.

It was one of the best kept state secrets in this gossipy government town in years. Minutes after the ceremony in the 34-year-old, four-story colonial style building of Flemish-bond brick on College avenue, workmen started attaching the plaques that made it official: the building which for years was the new treasury building, then the old Senate office building, is now the William S. James Senate Office Building.

The lieutenant governor had been kept in the dark. Likewise the secretary of state, the attorney general and the speaker of the House.