



KARL MERTON FERRON : SUN STAFF

Back on board: William Donald Schaefer nulls education funding at a state Board of Public Works meeting yesterday.

Schaefer picks up fight for 'his' city

■ **Comptroller:** In his new role, the former mayor challenges Schموke over a 'botched-up' City Life Museums deal.

By JOANNA DAEMMRICH
SUN STAFF

He may be Maryland's new comptroller in Annapolis, but William Donald Schaefer has wasted little time letting everyone know his heart is still in Baltimore.

On Monday, moments after he was sworn in before a cheering crowd in the State House, Schaefer called for the state to take over the Baltimore Convention Center.

Yesterday, even as he began scrutinizing state contracts, Schaefer had his staff prepare a letter urging Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke not to sell

some of Baltimore's most treasured historical properties that made up the failed City Life Museums.

"I've never seen a more botched-up deal in the city," fumed Schaefer, 77.

"It's a tragedy," he said during a break in a daylong meeting of the state Board of Public Works. "What if some restaurant comes in? It's certainly destructive to the history of the city."

Many political observers were anticipating strife in the State House with the return of the former governor, who has had a strained relationship with his successor, Gov. Parris N. Glendening. So far, however, the two governors have avoided acrimony.

Glendening went so far as to declare a "lovesfest" at their first appearance together at the Board of Public Works, the three-member panel that must [See Schaefer, 9A]

Schaefer renews fight for 'his' city

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approve virtually all state expenditures. Smiling for the television cameras, the two men jokingly exchanged tokens of affection: heart-shaped boxes of chocolate from Glendening, flowers from Schaefer.

Not to be outdone, the third member, state Treasurer Richard N. Dixon, presented both with oversized \$1,000 "bills."

In an unexpected twist of the political drama, Schaefer is feuding anew with Schmoke, the man who followed him as mayor of his beloved hometown.

Schaefer's concern with city affairs since becoming state comptroller — a job defined by the Maryland Constitution as a kind of super-accountant who has "general superintendence of the fiscal affairs of the state" — has surprised some, bemused others and angered Schmoke.

Deflecting the latest blunt criticism, Schmoke blamed Schaefer yesterday for doing nothing to prevent the demise of the City Life Museums, once a nine-building repository of important and quirky artifacts of Baltimore's past.

The museums — including the Carroll Mansion, H. L. Mencken House and 1840 House — were christened "City Life" under Schaefer in 1985 in the midst of the downtown renaissance. They closed in June 1997, the victim of debts, poor attendance and management miscues.

"People will recall that at the request of many of our leading citizens we privatized the City Life Museums, and Mr. Schaefer was a member of that private board," Schmoke said in a prepared statement. "Unfortunately, under that board, the City Life Museums went belly up.

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Housing Commissioner Daniel P. Henson III, who has sent out letters seeking bids from local developers to buy or lease the buildings, had a few more tough words. "I have a disconnect here," Hen-

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Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke, on William Donald Schaefer

son said. "What does he [Schaefer] have to do with this? The guy has a full-time job. Why doesn't he stick with his full-time job?"

Schaefer said he only learned recently that the historical properties were up for sale. Aghast, he spent more than a week searching for a way to use his new position as comptroller to rescue them.

His deputy, Robert L. Swann, determined the state has invested more than \$2 million in the museums. The state also has a historical easement on one, the 1808 Carroll Mansion, home of Declaration of Independence signer Charles Carroll. But the buildings are owned by the city.

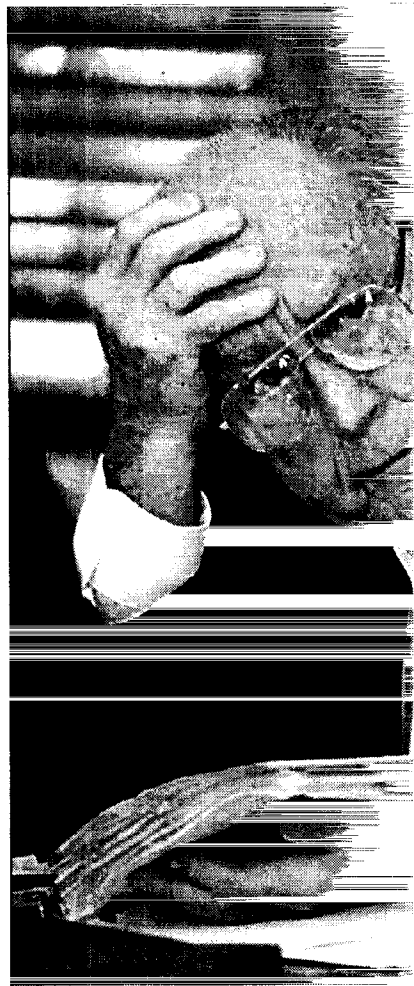
Swann had just finished out the term of the late Louis L. Goldstein, the state's comptroller for almost 40 years. He said yesterday he has concluded: "We have no real right to step in."

Baltimore is offering to sell or lease seven of the nine museums, as long as their historical features are retained, in hopes that the private sector can resurrect them. The 1814-vintage Peale Museum was never on the block. After an outcry from local historians, the Mencken House, once home to the city's famous journalist, was taken off.

Schaefer also took the opportunity yesterday to question the spending priorities of city education officials, when they appealed to the board for \$4.9 million in construction funds.

He defended his criticisms, which Schmoke has curtly described as "meddling." Schaefer, who was mayor for 15 years before serving two terms as governor, said: "I had an interest in the city even before he was born."

Some called it only natural. Said Baltimore Del. Howard P. Rawlings: "You can take Schaefer



Tag team: William Donald Schaefer

out of Baltimore City, but you can't take Baltimore City out of Schaefer."

"For a state comptroller, he seems to be taking a remarkable interest in the affairs of the city,"



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er and Parris Glendening began their Public Works "lovefest" by exchanging chocolate and flowers.

said Matthew A. Crenson, a political scientist at the Johns Hopkins University. "Now that he has a public platform from which to speak, he probably feels free to articulate some of the things that

he's been thinking about all these years."

Still, said Crenson, that could soon spill over into the State House.

"Eventually, he'll turn his at-

tention from the affairs of the city to the state," he said, "and then he'll be second-guessing the governor."

Sun staff writer Gady A. Epstein contributed to this article.