



Laurie Dewitt/The Gazette

Pallbearers carry Eugene Lynch's casket into St. John the Evangelist in Silver Spring at his funeral Tuesday. Lynch died Thursday at 50.

## In wake of deaths, Knapp moves to reconfigure council panels

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Montgomery County Council President Michael J. Knapp is moving swiftly to reconfigure council committees to fill the vacancy left by Councilwoman Marilyn J. Praisner's death Friday. "I don't want to have a situa-

tion where we have an opportunity to look at things with some fresh eyes and we don't take advantage of that," Knapp said Tuesday

**Work begins on finding replacements**  
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afternoon.

"I don't want to do anything because that's the way it's been done," said Knapp, who succeeded Praisner in December as council president.

Sources who asked not to be identified said Knapp is looking at taking over the chairmanship of the Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee, where Praisner took over the reins soon after becoming council president in December 2006.

Asked whether he had decided to succeed Praisner as chairman, Knapp said he has not made any decisions and does not expect to announce any committee changes before next week.

But, as to his leading PHED, "that's one

of the options," Knapp said.

Sources said Knapp is considering tapping Councilwoman Valerie Ervin (D-Dist. 5) of Silver Spring, who previously served on the school board, to run the Education Committee he now leads. Knapp declined to comment, saying he needs to talk to all the council members.

"I'm considering everything — there's not anything that's not on the table right now," Knapp said.

So is altering the duties of the Management and Fiscal Policy (MFP) Committee, Knapp said.

Praisner led that committee for years until she moved over to lead PHED after the 2006 election. Her switch was a reflection of what voters seemed to say at the polls: greater skepticism about the benefits of growth in a county where roads are among the most congested in the nation.

During her long time at the helm of the Management and Fiscal Policy Committee, Praisner crafted it to deal with issues she was interested in, Knapp said.

The committee's structure does not serve the interests of council members, and perhaps of the county, as best it could, Knapp said.

Sources said Knapp was considering moving Councilwoman Duchy Trachtenberg (D-At large) of North Bethesda from the chairmanship of that committee.

Knapp did not comment on that possibility but said Trachtenberg was the one member with whom he had not yet discussed committee changes.

Civic activists said they are worried about changes that don't acknowledge the slow-growth sentiments of county residents.

Knapp said he didn't see a slow-growth mandate from the last election. Rather, he saw the influence of major endorsements in the results.

Councilman Marc Elrich (D-At large) of Takoma Park said he would like to run the PHED committee but is not wedded to anything "except making sure this council can function."

"As far as I know, everything is still in play," Elrich said.

Elrich has criticized county policies that allowed development to outpace the availability of transit and road capacity. He serves on the PHED committee with Nancy M. Floreen (D-At large) of Garrett Park, a former Planning Board member who is viewed as pro-development.

Ervin, through an aide, declined to comment. Trachtenberg did not return calls by The Gazette's deadline.