

MONTGOMERY
NOTEBOOK*Homeland
Security Chief
To Lose Job
In Overhaul*

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Homeland security chief **Gordon Aoyagi** is planning to end his 23-year career with the county in the spring. Aoyagi's plans were inadvertently disclosed at County Executive **Isiah Leggett's** news conference last week to flesh out his reorganization of government departments and agencies.

The overhaul, which must be approved by the County Council, would create a separate Transportation Department and a General Services Department. The restructuring also calls for abolishing the Department of Homeland Security.

Leggett (D) said the changes would make government "more open, inviting, responsive and accountable."

The latter move begged the question of what would become of Aoyagi, 62, who watched the news conference from the front row of the county executive's conference room. Leggett was coy in response to a reporter's question: "Right now, he's not going anywhere."

After the news conference, Aoyagi elaborated. He led the committee that examined how to reorganize county departments and agencies. After studying other jurisdictions, Aoyagi said the committee listed among its recommendations establishing an Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security within the executive's office and making the Police Department responsible for building security and Leggett's protection.

"Why should I stand in the way of something that impacts all residents of Montgomery?" said Aoyagi, who does not have another job lined up.

The Homeland Security agency was created in the post-Sept. 11, 2001, environment by former then-County Executive **Douglas M. Duncan** to better coordinate the county's response to disasters. Aoyagi took over after serving as the county's fire administrator and earlier as an assistant chief administrative officer and chief of the county's transit services. Aoyagi was also in the running to become Leggett's chief administrative officer, a position held by **Timothy Firestone**.

The agency was not without critics. After a homeland security officer chastised public library patrons for viewing sexually-explicit material on the Internet, some County Council members questioned the role of the department.

"I'd probably advise the next county executive not to have a Department of Homeland Security," council member **George L. Leventhal** (D-At Large) said at the time.

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Gordon Aoyagi, who has worked for Montgomery County 23 years, took over the homeland security department after serving as county fire administrator.

Two Democrats First to File To Fill Praisner's Council Seat

"We don't want them swaggering around trying to figure out whether Osama is in the house at the Little Falls library."

2 File for Praisner's Seat

Two Democratic candidates, **Cary Lamari** and **Pat Ryan**, are the first to file to run in the County Council District 4 special election to fill the vacancy created by the death of **Marilyn Praisner**.

Lamari is a former president of the Montgomery County Civic Federation. He ran for one of four at-large seats on the council in 2006 and finished 11th out of 13 candidates.

Ryan, a federal government consultant, has worked on affordable housing issues as co-chair of Action in Montgomery and vice chair of the National Coalition for Homeless. He retired from the federal government after two decades of work on the House Veterans Affairs Committee and before that at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Ryan said in a news release that his experience "as an advocate for the needs of veterans, shepherding ideas into laws and analyzing complex budgets" would serve District 4 constituents well. He pledged not to take campaign contributions from developers.

Earlier in the week, **Don Praisner**, the widower of the late council member, said he would either run for the seat or get behind a candidate who he believes would best carry out his wife's legacy.

"I will do one or the other, definitely," he said. "I know time is getting short and at some point, I, family and friends have to decide what it is we are going to do. I

haven't really made up my mind yet."

Praisner is retired from the CIA and serves on the board of directors of several local nonprofit organizations that help people with disabilities and children.

As for the fine print of the special election, candidates must only be residents of the eastern county district by the day of the general election, so one could in theory move into a rental property or buy a house in the district after the deadline for filing.

Candidates who were not registered with a political party as of Nov. 19, 2007, can qualify for the ballot by filing a petition with the signatures of 1 percent of registered voters, or 1,000, in District 4. Non-affiliated candidates must declare their intent to run by 5 p.m. March 23 and file petitions by April 15.

K-9 Help for Gaithersburg

Gaithersburg police got a new crime fighter this month. Max, a 1-year-old Belgian Malinois from the Czech Republic, will replace retiring K-9 Buddy, who was trained to sniff out narcotics.

Besides drug work, Max will be trained to assist officers with apprehensions and searches, Police Chief **John King** said. Max and his handler, Cpl. **Chad Eastman**, began training at the D.C. police K-9 academy this week.

The department was able to acquire Max with a \$7,000 gift from the newly created Gaithersburg Police Foundation. King said Max made a strong first impression during his first day at the academy, when he responded to commands in Czech.

"He's a bilingual dog," King joked. "A smart dog."