

# Patterson names Poisson as county legal counsel

BY RALPH R. ECHTINAW

STAFF WRITER

Oakland County Prosecutor Richard Thompson gave Poisson to county Executive L. Brooks Patterson Tuesday.

Chief assistant prosecutor Gerald D. Poisson, that is. Patterson announced at a press conference that Poisson is his choice to replace Jack Hays as the county's corporation counsel, or lawyer. Hays retired earlier this year after more than 20 years in the corporation counsel office, 11 years as director.

The office of corporation counsel employs five people, including the director, and is essentially the county government's full-time attorney. Corporation counsel attorneys do everything from advising the county clerk on questionable deed transfers to defending the county in multimillion-dollar lawsuits.

Poisson, 40, said he will do whatever Patterson wants in the new job. "I'm going to do it the way Brooks wants it done and give Brooks what he wants."

Poisson has worked for the prosecutor's office since 1981, the last four years as chief assistant to Thompson. Poisson will begin his new job Jan. 10, as first assistant director for six months because Patterson promised the

county board of commissioners to leave the top job vacant for that length of time.

Then Poisson will ascend to the top job, providing the commission confirms his appointment. As first assistant director, Poisson will get \$54,000 to \$70,000. As director he'll get \$74,000 to \$84,000. His current job pays \$82,000.

Although former corporation

counsel Hays is sorry that his first assistant for many years, Linda Wasielewski, wasn't offered his old job, he has nothing but nice things to say about Poisson. "I want to congratulate Jerry on his appointment," he said. "I wish him the best. I couldn't come up with a better one."

Said Thompson: "It's really with mixed emotions that I ap-

pear before you today. I'm going to be missing my right hand. I've come to rely on (Poisson), his loyalty and his persistence."

However, Thompson added, "As a resident of Oakland County, I'm going to feel a lot more comfortable having him as corporation counsel."

Larry Bunting, currently Thompson's chief of legal opera-

tions, will take over as chief assistant prosecutor, Thompson said.

Poisson grew up in northwest Detroit and attended St. Mary Redford High School, class of 1971. His father was a teacher and assistant principal in the Detroit school district.

Poisson has a criminal justice administration bachelor's degree from Michigan State University

and a law degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School of Lansing.

Poisson started his career as an investigator for the U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco & Firearms, where he worked for two years. He also spent two years as a senior law intern with the Michigan Department of Attorney General just before hiring on with Oakland County government.

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