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Gilchrist Denies Job Offer Made to Liquor Prober

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Montgomery County Executive Charles W. Gilchrist acknowledged yesterday that his aides had talked to Leonard I. Colodny about working for the county but denied that they had ever offered him a job in violation of county merit laws.

"I'm not accusing Colodny of outright lies," Gilchrist said at a press conference. "Much of it is perception. He was not offered any job, but it may have been suggested that he would want to apply for them."

Gilchrist was responding to a deposition released several hours earlier in which Colodny charged that two of the county executive's aides, Gerry Evans and Chief Administrative Officer Robert Wilson, offered him jobs that by county law can only be filled through the merit system.

Yesterday, both Evans and Wilson conceded that they had talked to Colodny about the jobs mentioned in the deposition, but insisted they had never actually offered the jobs. Instead, both said they had merely suggested he apply for the jobs.

Yesterday, Colodny, who served as a consultant on the county's liquor operations until he was fired by Gilchrist in August, gave this account of the job offers:

On Feb. 27, Evans phoned him at home and said, "Charlie [Gilchrist] said talk to Lenny and see if we can get him in the department somehow, get him on, you know, as a liquor store manager and then see if we can work something out once he gets on board to move him up."

Colodny said he replied that he did not know how that could work.

Evans reportedly responded, "The thing is, it's not a bad-paying job, you know we could get you almost \$20,000 and we'd have plenty of justification for moving you up once you're in there, I don't know how long a period it would take."

Later in the conversation, Colodny asked how long it would be

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before he could move up to a better job in the liquor department. Evans reportedly responded, "I mean, you know, six months or so, the thing is, we're sure about your abilities and everything, we're sure that as soon as people in the department see how you perform we can uh, you know, you'll have a home out we have to be realistic and get you on board while we can."

Colodny said he did not want to manage a liquor store; instead, he wanted an administrative job that Gilchrist had reportedly offered him in January -- assistant chief of the liquor stores.

Hours later, according to Colodny, Evans phoned him again with another job offer -- assistant director of civil defense.

Colodny said he would like to stick to a field he was familiar with.

Evans reportedly replied, "Well, I mean, it's nothing that you don't have in your background, and it's kind of a neat little office, they do all kinds of things with fuel and uh, mercy planning, you know, it's a lot of relations with the Chamber of Commerce and getting out, you know, and it's a better paying job, too."

Colodny said he was not interested in the job.

Hours later, Wilson phoned Colodny. After Colodny told Wilson that he had a commitment from Gilchrist to become assistant chief of the liquor stores, Wilson reportedly said, "But you were telling me, you're absolutely not at all interested in the other job?"

Colodny, who thought that Wilson was referring to the job of assistant director of civil defense, responded, "Well, I been in government and I hate to see people in a slot that they don't know anything about."

Wilson reportedly replied, "Well, no, I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about the assistant's job."

Colodny: "No, it doesn't make any sense to me."

Yesterday, Wilson said that when he phoned Colodny to talk about the assistant liquor store manager's job, he was "very careful not to create the impression that we could give him the job." Wilson said that when he asked Colodny if he were interested in the job, he was actually asking whether Colodny was interested in applying for the job.

Under county law, merit jobs must be advertised and the county personnel office must choose persons eligible for the job from applications submitted to the office. The department head then selects the person from a list of several applicants. The basis for selection must be qualifications.

Colodny did not apply for any of the jobs he said he was offered by Evans and Wilson. Several months before, however, he had applied to be deputy director of the Department of Liquor Control. He was turned down, but in May he was hired by Gilchrist as a consultant on the operations of the department of liquor control.

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