

The Legal Intelligencer

THE OLDEST LAW JOURNAL IN THE UNITED STATES 1843-2010

PHILADELPHIA, FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 2010

VOL 241 • NO. 14

An **ALM** Publication

Cohen Seglias More Than Doubles Its Pittsburgh Office

BY ZACK NEEDLES

Of the Legal Staff

Philadelphia-based Cohen Seglias Pallas Greenhall & Furman has beefed up its commercial litigation group and more than doubled the size of its Pittsburgh office by adding three partners and two associates.

Manning J. "Jim" O'Connor II has joined the firm as managing partner of the Pittsburgh office.

Patrick Sorek and Mark Stadler have also joined as partners, while Douglas C. Hart has joined as a senior associate and Christopher A. Cafardi has joined as an associate.

Prior to joining Cohen Seglias, O'Connor and Sorek were partners with Leech Tishman Fuscaldo & Lampl in Pittsburgh.

Hart was an associate with Leech Tishman.

Stadler was formerly a director at Cohen & Grigsby and Cafardi was an associate at Pepper Hamilton, both in Pittsburgh.

The attorneys joined the firm Jan. 1, expanding the Pittsburgh office from three to eight attorneys.

John A. Greenhall, managing partner of Cohen Seglias, said the firm, which began in 1988 as a construction boutique, wanted to hire attorneys with the expertise to handle a variety of business matters for its construction clients.

"The reality is that a large portion of our work is construction-related and those clients have commercial transactions and other issues that come off of that, which are not construction-related," Greenhall said.

Greenhall said the firm is hoping to re-create in Pittsburgh the type of success it saw when it added a transactional group to complement its construction practice in Philadelphia.

"We see the markets as being very similar," he said. "We wanted to try and replicate the same type of synergistic practice groups."

Greenhall said that although the five attorneys came from several different firms, they all knew each other prior to making the move to Cohen Seglias.

According to Greenhall, a recruiter put the firm in touch with Stadler, who then led the firm to O'Connor, his longtime friend and colleague.

Through O'Connor, Greenhall said, the firm was then introduced to Sorek, Hart and Cafardi.

"The tie-together was really one based on friendship, which to me was a great reason to all work together," Greenhall said.

Stadler, who focuses his practice mostly on representing health care providers in business transactions, expressed a similar motivation for joining the firm.



PICTURED (CLOCKWISE FROM FRONT LEFT): MARK STADLER, CHRISTOPHER A. CAFARDI, MANNING J. "JIM" O'CONNOR II, DOUGLAS C. HART AND PATRICK SOREK.

"It is a growing and dynamic firm that is in an ascending mode," he said. "We had the opportunity to have a substantial impact locally here in Pittsburgh and it seemed to be a good mix."

O'Connor said he originally was not looking to leave Leech Tishman but a number of meetings with attorneys at Cohen Seglias and the lure of the "chance to build something here in Pittsburgh with the support of the firm" changed his mind.

Greenhall said that prior to O'Connor joining, the firm did not have a formal managing partner in its Pittsburgh office.

"We felt with having eight attorneys out there that I needed a direct liaison who had the seniority to carry it off," Greenhall said. "That's why we decided to create that position."

O'Connor said he was confident in his ability to run the office because of his experience as a member of Leech Tishman's management committee.

"I volunteered to do it because I think I am equipped to do it and, although administrative responsibilities are not my first choice of things to do, I welcome the challenge," said O'Connor.

O'Connor, whose practice centers on commercial disputes, employment issues and health care litigation, said he will not allow his duties as managing partner to take time away from his clients.

"I'm actually hoping to increase my commitment to my practice and I think it just means I'm going to have to work harder," O'Connor said.

O'Connor said he has a "very loyal client base" that has stuck by him through a few lateral moves over the years and this move was no different.

Stadler said he has "not heard a negative word" from his clients, most of whom have followed him to Cohen Seglias.

Both O'Connor, who joined 55-lawyer Cohen Seglias from 31-lawyer Leech Tishman, and Stadler, who came from 140-lawyer Cohen & Grigsby, said they plan to keep their rates basically the same as they were at their old firms.

"With the economy the way it is I'm trying to be sensitive to the rates the Pittsburgh market will bear while still being cognizant of the rates charged by the firm in Philadelphia," said O'Connor. "I'm trying to keep my rates generally steady because of the market in the Pittsburgh area."

Stadler said his "intent is that my rates are going to remain consistent with what they were."

Cohen & Grigsby President and CEO Jack W. Elliott and Leech Tishman managing partner Pete A. Fuscaldo both could not be reached for comment at press time.

Greenhall said the firm has no immediate plans to further grow the Pittsburgh office but has turned its attention to the Maryland market.

"We're talking to firms in the Baltimore area for affiliation," he said.

Greenhall also said the firm is planning to open a northern New Jersey office. •