

Philly law firm expands Pittsburgh office, names local leader

BY PATTY TASCARELLA

Philadelphia-based law firm Cohen Seglias Pallas Greenhall & Furman PC has added five lawyers to its seven-year-old Pittsburgh office, more than doubling its size.

Manning J. “Jim” O’Connor II, one of the additions, has been named managing partner of the Pittsburgh office, the first time the firm has appointed a local leader.

The newcomers came from three different firms, an “unusual” move according to O’Connor, who was among a trio of lawyers joining Cohen Seglias from Leech Tishman Fuscaldo & Lampl LLC. O’Connor and Patrick Sorek are now partners, and Douglas Hart is an associate.

The other two lawyers joining Cohen Seglias are Mark Stadler, previously a director of Cohen & Grigsby PC, Downton, who is now a partner; and Christopher Cafardi, formerly an associate at Pepper Hamilton LLP’s Downtown office, who has come aboard as an associate.

“When Roy first contacted me, I wasn’t interested in leaving (Leech Tishman),” O’Connor said. “This was a very interesting opportunity and a credit to Roy’s vision for the Pittsburgh office.”

Cohen Seglias Firmwide Managing Partner Roy Cohen said he was seeking “the right talent” rather than peeling practice groups from Pittsburgh firms.

“These people were an excellent fit to add to the commercial litigation base our firm has,” he said.

Cohen opened the office in the Gulf Tower without Pittsburgh staff in 2003 because of client demand — largely from the construction sector — and initially serviced them by having a trio of Philadelphia-based lawyers split time between the cities. Eventually, four lawyers were added, and the office now has nine lawyers.



JOE WOJCIK

Roy Cohen, left, managing partner of Cohen Seglias Pallas Greenhall & Furman PC announced the addition of five lawyers to its Pittsburgh office. Among the additions was Manning J. O’Connor II, right, who was named Pittsburgh managing partner.

The focus of the office is commercial litigation and ties neatly into related practice groups in Cohen Seglias’s other offices.

The company has a heavy focus on construction litigation, and it works with roughly 1,000 construction companies nationwide and has clients in 40 states.

Cohen said Cohen Seglias saw strong growth in 2009, outpacing 2008, but he declined to disclose numbers.

“In any down economy, litigation picks up, but especially construction litigation, and that’s going to be hot for quite a while,” said Robert Denney, who leads Wayne-based law firm consultancy Robert Denney Associates. “These cases drag on and on.”

Both Cohen and O’Connor said they could see adding more lawyers in Pittsburgh, depending on opportunities and availability, but that the firm, which is opening new offices in Maryland and New Jersey over the next few months, does not have hiring goals here.

Cohen Seglias Pallas Greenhall & Furman PC

BASED: Philadelphia

LAWYERS: 60

FOUNDED: 1988

MANAGING PARTNER: Roy Cohen

PITTSBURGH MANAGING PARTNER: Manning J. O’Connor II

WEB SITE: www.cohenseglias.com

“Absolutely, we’ve talked about developing the office consistent with the firm’s overall growth plan,” O’Connor said.

Cohen couldn’t say whether early 2010 will see a flood of established lawyers moving to new firms.

“We get bombarded with resumes from laterals because we’re in a growth mode,” he said.