

Philadelphia firm Saul Ewing opens in Pittsburgh, drawn by natural gas work

By Gina Passarella / The Legal Intelligencer

Philadelphia-based Saul Ewing has opened an office in Pittsburgh, a market that has been sought out by out-of-town firms clamoring not just for Marcellus Shale work, but everything the shale play brings with it.

Saul Ewing is said to have been looking for the right fit in Pittsburgh for about a year, and has now reached a deal to bring on four attorneys from the Pittsburgh office of Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis.

The group, which consists of partners Jay Panzarella, Adam F. Kelson and David R. Berk and associate Christopher Evans, focuses on corporate finance, business counseling, tax, and mergers and acquisitions.

"We view the Pittsburgh market as, economically, one that's been really picking up," managing partner David S. Antzis said last week.

A lot of that growth has to do with the energy industry and particularly the Marcellus Shale region rich in natural gas, Mr. Antzis said. That is a practice the firm has been building over the years, and "having a 412 area code" is something the firm's clients have said would generate more work in that practice for Saul Ewing, he said.

Mr. Antzis said the firm intends to add energy attorneys on the ground in Pittsburgh, but the business group is a good start to help capitalize on all of the nonenergy work related to the energy boom in the region. He said commercial and residential construction is picking up, and the retail and hotel industries are getting busier.

"We think there's going to be a whole lot of economic activity, and that's part of the reason a business group was attractive to us," he said.

Mr. Panzarella said in a statement that he and his colleagues were enthusiastic about opening a Pittsburgh office for Saul Ewing. Mr. Panzarella has served with a number of Pittsburgh-area firms in the last few years: He co-led Klett Rooney Lieber & Schorling's corporate and transactional practice before the firm merged with Buchanan Ingersoll. He left a few months after the July 2006 merger to take a leadership opportunity at Pietragallo Gordon Alfano Bosick & Raspanti.

In January 2008, Mr. Panzarella moved to Schnader Harrison.

Mr. Panzarella and Mr. Kelson joined Saul Ewing last Tuesday, Mr. Evans is set to join this week, and Mr. Berk, an equity partner at Schnader Harrison, needed a little more time before making the move, Mr. Antzis said.

Saul Ewing opened a Boston office last year and still intends to focus on growing that as well. The recruiter who helped with the Boston office, Gary Cadogan of JR Search, did the recruiting for Pittsburgh, too.

Mr. Antzis said the firm is well positioned financially to invest in the growth of two offices. Saul Ewing prepaid about \$1 million in expenses for 2012 out of 2011 profits and brought in a few "nice premiums" on legal projects early this year, he said.

The new Pittsburgh attorneys are currently in temporary space until the firm finds a more permanent location, probably by late summer, Mr. Antzis said.

Saul Ewing isn't the only out-of-town firm to open a location in Pittsburgh this year.

San Francisco-based insurance defense firm Gordon & Rees opened an office in the city in March, with the addition of a group of Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney attorneys led by partner S. Manoj Jegasothy.

Why? A new industrial boom, born of the sprawling Marcellus Shale natural gas play, which is attracting businesses of many types to the region. And that, of course, works to the benefit of lawyers.

"We are seeing more interest in the Pittsburgh market from firms from outside the city than we've seen in quite some time," recruiter Lori Carpenter of Carpenter Legal Search said recently.

Asked what was driving the interest, Ms. Carpenter had two words: "Marcellus Shale."

But, as she said, firms are still vying for the shale work and no one has come out the victor just yet.

"There's not a group of lawyers that I could sit here and say could move as a group and have \$15 million of business in that practice," she said of shale-related work. "There are a lot of lawyers that are doing bits and pieces of it and starting to build their practices there."

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