

Courting clients beyond R.I.

Law firm expands **BY MARY MACDONALD** | MacDonald@PBN.com

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, Higgins, Cavanagh & Cooney LLP has broadened its base from Rhode Island to two adjoining states.

The firm, which is well known for its trial practice, is pursuing business law clients and others for whom a local presence is required.

In 2016, the firm opened an office in Boston. This spring, it followed up with an expansion into Hartford, Conn. The home base, meanwhile, has moved from a historical building in downtown Providence to a more modern, spacious suite at the Westminster Square Building on Dorrance Street.

From its beginnings in 1951, the firm has grown to include 39 employees, including 18 attorneys. The expansion into Massachusetts, then Connecticut, was part of a long-term plan, said Managing Partner James A. Ruggieri.

“It’s important for our clients to know we have a presence there and we can handle whatever needs to be handled in the jurisdiction,” he said. “We have been representing companies, large and small, in Massachusetts and Connecticut for many years. There are clients who retain us to represent them in litigation in all three states. We are trying, as part of our strategic growth plan, to expand that work, and to be able to provide better service to our clients by having a physical presence.”

The firm practices in several specialty areas of law but is best known for its litigation work, representing companies that have been sued for a variety of reasons, and in product liability cases.

About 80% of the work conducted by Higgins, Cavanagh & Cooney is in litigation. “We handle everything from construction litigation [to] employment matters. We represent a lot of the big-box national retailers. We do their premises liability cases and other things that happen,” Ruggieri said.

One area of representation that is growing is in the asbestos field, where the firm represents heating and cooling

manufacturers and automotive manufacturers whose products may have had asbestos. Workers’ compensation defense is another top area.

In recent years, Ruggieri said, companies representing all industries seem to be less inclined to take chances. He’s noticed a growing aversion to risk in pushing cases to trial.

“For the most part, companies that are sued around the country, they’re in the business of managing these claims. They want to get them wrapped up quickly. The longer a lawsuit lives, the more it costs.

“They want cases resolved. They want to control the risk and they want us to be able to help them. Sometimes you can’t and that’s when cases are tried,” he said. ■



LEGAL EAGLE: James A. Ruggieri, managing partner at Higgins, Cavanaugh & Cooney, speaks with assistant Lisa Hennessey at the law firm’s Providence office.

PBN PHOTO/ MICHAEL SALERNO

TYPE OF BUSINESS: Law firm

LOCATION: 10 Dorrance St., Suite 400, Providence

EMPLOYEES: 39

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 1951

ANNUAL SALES: WND