

As published in the January 14-20, 2005 issue of:

Long Island Business NEWS

LAW

Curto makes office leap to grow Melville business

Anthony Curto, a senior partner and head of the corporate and commercial law department at Forchelli, Curto, Schwartz, Mineo, Carlino & Cohn, is moving from the office in Mineola to the one in Melville.

Curto's move, slated for Feb. 6, is part of the firm's effort to expand further east and bolster the Melville office, which it opened in 2003, initially focusing on land use.

"It's developing in such a way that it could utilize the skills of a transactional lawyer who is grounded in commercial and corporate matters," said Curto. "I have a number of corporate clients on Long Island in the Hauppauge, Melville area. It's closer to them. And it establishes additional strength in that office."

The firm will do commercial work out of the Mineola and Melville offices, but Melville will remain the hub of its growing land-use practice.

"Our office will handle land use, zoning and land development all over the Island," Curto said. "We'll be going all over the Island in that regard."

The large corporate presence in the "commercial hub" of Melville and Hauppauge, he added, made it important to have a commercial practice there.

"Today, with the traffic being what it is, even though it's a short distance, it takes time [to travel from Melville to Mineola]," Curto said. "It's inconvenient for some clients to come to Mineola."

He added that the firm views the Melville and Hauppauge areas and Suffolk in general as key regions.

"That's an interesting corridor," Curto said of Melville. "Suffolk is a big county. We think the future of growth out there is going to be large."

Moritt Hock takes bite out of Big Apple

In a move that makes it the latest firm to expand into New York City, Garden City-

based Moritt Hock Hamroff & Horowitz has opened an office in Manhattan at 330 Fifth Avenue.

The office, which opened at the end of November in Midtown Manhattan, is 4,000 square feet.

Managing Partner Marc L. Hamroff said it's the "result of the firm's expanding practice, particularly in the areas of entertainment law, financial transactions and real estate."

He added that the new office is part of the firm's "overall growth strategy to better service the needs of its diverse client base."

The Manhattan location will serve as a base of operations for attorneys based in New York and will allow Moritt Hock's Garden City attorneys "to be more productive when attending meetings, appearing in court or otherwise transacting business in Manhattan," Hamroff said.

This is the third office for the law firm, which employs more than 30 attorneys and also operates an office in Hackensack, N.J.

Bar pushing for videotaped confessions

Unveiling its 2005 legislative priorities, the New York State Bar Association is calling for an array of changes, including further reform of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, videotaping interrogations by police and a no-fault divorce system.

The five-point plan calls for continuing reforms of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, which were altered this year to be more lenient with first-time, non-violent offenders. The bar's pushing for the state to go further in 2005 and restore sentencing discretion to judges for drug charges rather than relying on guidelines.

It's also seeking to mandate that interrogations of suspects by law enforcement authorities be videotaped.

"The primary argument in support of this proposal is that it would reduce both false

confessions and false claims of coercion," said a spokeswoman for the bar, regarding the push to go to video.

In addition, the bar's seeking to increase access to lawyers in civil cases for low- and middle-income consumers. Although the bar said lawyers' pro bono work helps provide needed representation, "adequate funding from both the state and federal governments is necessary to ensure access to the justice system for those people who are at the lowest economic strata of our society."

A no-fault divorce system being touted by the bar would replace the current one and make divorces easier to get.

"Virtually every other state has some form of divorce that doesn't require the finding of fault," the bar said.

And at a time when many critics argue that lawyers are cashing in on a system that makes it too easy to go after companies and individuals with little or no justification, the bar is heading to the barricades to protect the right to sue.

The bar argues that it's important to preserve the right of "access to the court system for injured persons to exercise their right to seek compensation for their injuries."

The bar, however, said it supports the "study of, and reasoned debate about, the tort laws of New York based upon the view that such activities should lead to practical, responsible and beneficial change that is fair to all New Yorkers

Claude Solnik welcomes your comments and story tips. You can reach him at (631) 913-4244, or by e-mail at claudio.solnik@libn.com