

ASK A BUSY PERSON

BY MARTY DAKS

Q *Why did you decide to focus on real estate?*

Every person and business has some involvement in real estate, from the young family buying their first house to the retired couple that might be paying too much in property taxes, to a large corporation trying to redevelop an aging corporate campus. In a state where property is scarce and expensive, it creates a lot of opportunities to get smart about solving problems.

Q *What were you like growing up, and how did that affect your career choice?*

I am the son of a “Busy Person” [his father, Patrick Kennedy, was previously featured in this column] and an attorney, so I grew up seeing how being a lawyer can be so much more than just litigation or transactions. It’s about solving problems for people — no matter what kind of issue. I really feel like I learned from the best, and the community connection doesn’t fall far from the tree: I recently became a vice president of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, a land trust that Patrick helped incorporate when I was a toddler.

Q *What are some hot topics in New Jersey real estate law?*

Right now, many New Jersey municipalities are in court trying to deal with calculating their affordable housing obligations, which has a ripple effect on planning, land use, property taxes, and development. We’re also seeing the effects of years of delayed investment in transportation infrastructure.

Q *Are you involved in business development for the firm?*

I am a big advocate for combining your interests and nonprofit work with



RYAN KENNEDY

Counsel, Stevens & Lee

» Hopewell Borough resident Ryan Kennedy is counsel at the Princeton office of law firm Stevens & Lee. He represents private and government clients in all aspects of real estate acquisition, lending, and development, including land use, redevelopment, condemnation, property tax appeals, and transit-oriented development. He is also a member of the firm’s Administrative Law and Government Contracts Group, largely representing private companies in their dealings with the State of New Jersey. Kennedy, 37, holds a bachelor’s degree in history with a computer science minor from Boston College, and he graduated from Seton Hall University School of Law, cum laude, with a J.D. in 2005. He was recently named to the annual “New Leaders of the Bar” list by the *New Jersey Law Journal*.

business development, since making connections for my clients helps me assist them better. I’m very involved in the community, including serving as chair of the MIDJersey Chamber’s Hopewell Valley chapter and as president of the Hopewell Valley YMCA. I’m also involved with RWJ Hamilton Hospital Foundation’s Young Professionals Group. There’s no better way to connect with people than to roll up your sleeves and start solving your community’s problems, together. Because of that, my community contacts have become some of my best business contacts.

Q *What’s a significant case you worked on?*

Every case and transaction is significant, but in the area of condemnation, I handled one, *NJ Transit v. Mori*, that has since become a standard in how to value wetlands. Also, we recently overturned the award of a multimillion-dollar parking privatization contract.

Q *How do you stay organized?*

Technology is key. I have screens everywhere: three monitors on my desk and a TV hung on the wall for collaborative work. I’m always trying new ways to collaborate with colleagues and clients, which in a firm the size of Stevens & Lee means adapting so that people two or three states over can feel like they are in the same room.

Increasingly Customer Relationship Management systems and online portals are essential to my sanity and work/life balance — especially for nonprofit and civic work. I also think the best way to stay organized is to be up-front and realistic with people and just get things done. ✱