

10 MINUTES WITH ...

Why he's always on the phone

JONATHAN LAPPER BECAME A GO-TO LAWYER FOR REAL ESTATE DEALS



Jonathan Lapper at The Lodges at Cresthaven on Lake George.

DONNA ABBOTT-VLAHOS

Real estate attorney Jonathan Lapper has spent the past 32 years helping developers win approvals to transform communities. Those developers have built everything from resort hotels and retail shopping outlets to supermarkets and single-family housing projects.

The principal with Bartlett Pontiff Stewart & Rhodes in Glens Falls has assembled a roster of clients that reads like a who's who of the real estate development community.

What attracted you to real estate and commercial law? I have always liked seeing things get built, cleaned up and improved.

What was your strategy for building your practice when you first came to the area? I spent a lot of time developing relationships with builders and developers ... When I was 28, I got my first really large project when Wilmorite hired me to get the approvals for the Wilton Mall. The whole thing took a couple of years. We had to do a full environmental impact statement. That's where I really learned the craft and started to build a

JONATHAN LAPPER

Title: Principal

Company: Bartlett Pontiff Stewart & Rhodes P.C. in Glens Falls

Age: 57

Resides: Queensbury

Grew up: Huntington in Suffolk County

Education: Bachelor's from SUNY Binghamton; Law degree from Boston University

Family: Wife, Charlotte; two daughters, one stepson

reputation in land use.

You have worked with some of the most well-known developers in the region. Can you name some of them?

I worked on the Marriott Courtyard and Residence Inn by Marriott with BBL and the Equinox Cos. in Saratoga Springs. We worked with Frank Parillo and Mike Hoffman on the Hampton Inn in Saratoga.

We did the Hiland estates and golf club in Queensbury where I live. I've done a lot of work with the Michaels Group and I was really close with John Michaels. It was a big loss for this area when he died.

I worked with John Nigro on the Market 32 in Clifton Park. I am still working with Dave Kenney on his Marriott Courtyard in Lake George. He's adding an outdoor cafe.

Kenney's Courtyard project has been described as a catalyst for changing Lake George into a year-round community. What is your take of what is going on now in Lake George?

The hotel has been an important addition for the village. There is so much going on now. There are a lot new investments ... That is important

because hospitality is such a large part of the economy.

How did you end up working with Rich Schermerhorn in Queensbury?

I met him several years ago when I was working for a lender doing bank closings. He started building apartments before they were sexy. He has more than 2,000 now. Rich made a lot of good investments. He bought up a lot of property during the recession when land prices were deflated. Now he is developing many of them.

To have so many clients doing so many deals, you must be on the phone constantly. That is what makes my practice so interesting. I can do everything I need to do from my phone. I am a transactional lawyer, so it's all about the deal. Nobody cares if I go to South Beach with my wife as long as they can reach me on the phone. It's exciting.

The staff at our firm has to be flexible too. I have strong litigators behind me. And Kelly Chadwick, my commercial real estate paralegal, is my right hand.

Tell me about one of your most memorable projects. There are so many. One that stands out because it was both exciting and sad was about four years ago when Dean Beckos, owner of the Montcalm Restaurant, decided to retire and sell the property. We used to spend a lot of time at the Montcalm, so I was sorry to see it close.

Dean asked me to represent the purchaser, Corey Shanus of Sobert Realty, who wanted to build outlet stores. He wanted me to help Corey get land-use approvals because the deal was contingent on it. Corey hired an architect from Connecticut and designed a project with a theme that was based on the Sagamore Resort.

It was a great project and the outlets are doing well, but I still miss the Montcalm.

You are a big sports fan. How did a kid who grew up so close to New York City become such a big Red Sox fan? I was 9 years old in 1969 when the New York Mets won the World Series, so I was a big Mets fan growing up. But when I went to Boston for law school, Fenway Park was right there, so it was easy to fall in love with the Red Sox.

There are a lot of Yankees fans in this area so it makes it fun because there is such a rivalry between the Yankees and Red Sox.

Do you go to many games? I still get to Fenway quite a bit. We just went in June with David and Lynne Michaels of the Michaels Group in Malta. We got to see Chris Sale pitch.

-Robin K. Cooper, @AlbBizCooper