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Professional Services

Valley law firm changes name after elevating longtime partner to masthead

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From left, Jason Morris, Adam Baugh and Michael Withey of Withey Morris Baugh PLC. CARL SCHULTZ

By Greg Barr - Editor in Chief, Phoenix Business Journal
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Withey Morris PLC, one of Arizona's leading land use and real estate law firms, has added the name of partner Adam Baugh to its masthead. The firm is now known as Withey Morris Baugh PLC.

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Jason Morris, one of the two founding partners of the firm along with Michael Withey, said the process to add Baugh to the firm's name actually began when Baugh joined the firm some 16 years ago and made an immediate impression.

"It's a culmination of everything Adam has done to put his name on the door. He was an incredible new employee, a smart and effective associate and ultimately became a partner who built up an impressive book of business and was excellent at training staff," Morris said. "He never asked for it; it was a case of Mike and I recognizing his name belonged there."

With more than 17 years of land use and zoning experience, Baugh has represented an array of clients, including Lennar Homes, CVS, Ashley Furniture and Lincoln Properties.

"It's a dream come true for me. Typically when a firm changes its name it's the result of a merger or a partner breaks off to form his own firm, so it's great for me to be able to do that with my partners and friends," Baugh said.



Adam Baugh
PROVIDED BY ADAM BAUGH

"I grew up in the early 1980s and '90s and you'd see those great NBA teams like the Bulls and Lakers who achieved success with homegrown talent, not just assembling a superstar team, and I think that is what we have accomplished [at this firm]. We have an organic assembly of great talent, not people poached from other firms," he added.

A Southern California native, Baugh graduated from Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor School of Law in 2006, and began an internship in Phoenix under then-Mayor Phil Gordon, when he first met Withey and Morris.

Baugh works the nuances in era of NIMBYism

Baugh has built up a reputation for being able to bring both sides together to get a deal done in this era of increasing NIMBYism – the not-in-my-backyard opposition to projects.

"People come to us because it's becoming increasingly difficult and that's the reality of it," Morris said. "It used to be that someone would print up some flyers and canvas a neighborhood to protest a project. The digital age has allowed neighbors from one side of the Valley and the other to communicate through Facebook and NextDoor, so the pressure has become more intense."

Baugh regularly appears before neighborhood organizations, planning commissions, city councils, and appellate hearings to advocate and obtain land use entitlements or bring two sides together to alter a project that satisfies all parties.

"Sometimes it's a matter of looking for a compromise or sometimes it's just education or working to get additional neighborhood engagement, to turn NIMBYism into support. I think I'm best at finding that compromise that leaves both parties feeling like it's a win," Baugh said.

The firm now has a total of 16 employees, including eight attorneys and two land-use planners on staff.

Though the idea of adding a water and environmental law practice might be something on the firm's wish list, Morris said the goal going forward is to concentrate on organic growth – while still maintaining the steady stream of phone calls coming in from larger Valley firms and national firms looking to acquire Withey Morris Baugh.

"We've always tried to be right-sized and efficient with the [resources] we have in order to grow. Not a quarter goes by without us being approached by a larger firm interested in our practice group, and it's always interesting to have those discussions," Morris said. "After work this Friday we are going with the whole office on a taco tour to try out everyone's favorite tacos. I don't think you could do that with 500 attorneys."

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3	Fennemore	93

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