

 [Click to Print](#) or Select '**Print**' in your browser menu to print this document.

Page printed from: *New Jersey Law Journal*

Lawyer-Politician Bolting Cozen for Camden 'Renaissance'

David Gialanella, New Jersey Law Journal

June 17, 2015

Jeffrey Nash, a lawyer and longtime public official in South Jersey, is slated to leave the law firm where he's spent nearly three decades in order to launch a solo practice in Camden.

Nash—a Democratic Camden County freeholder for 24 years and Delaware River Port Authority vice chair for 13 years—has announced plans to leave the Cherry Hill office of Philadelphia-based Cozen O'Connor as of July 2 and launch the Nash Law Group.

He has not executed a lease yet but is eyeing a brownstone in the Cooper-Grant section of the city, which includes portions of the Rutgers University campus and is bordered by the Benjamin Franklin Bridge to the north and the Delaware River to the west.

"This is a leap of faith," Nash, a partner at Cozen O'Connor, said in an interview. "Camden city is going through a renaissance. ... I want to be part of that."

There are four main factors driving the renaissance, according to Nash: decreases in crime, which he attributes to the Camden County Police Department's takeover of policing duties in the city; support for charter schools to replace failing public schools; and improvements in quality of life, including construction of parks and recreation facilities, as well as demolition of abandoned structures.

Nash also cited tax credits that have drawn companies to the city. The South Jersey Times reported last December that the New Jersey Economic Development Authority had given eight corporations about \$630 million in tax breaks to relocate to or remain in the city in the preceding six months alone.

It's a controversial practice, but one that has created a draw for Camden, Nash said, noting plans by pro basketball's Philadelphia 76ers to move the franchise's practice facility to the city.

Nash also claims there are for-profit entities looking to locate co-ops in the city that could train and ultimately employ residents, though he declined to name any interested entities.

"All that is going on. All that makes a rebirth," Nash said. "There's something very effective about offering someone an equity interest in the work product."

When Nash joined Cozen O'Connor, in 1986, he was its 60th lawyer hired. The firm now has about 500 lawyers in 23 cities—including the Cherry Hill office, which opened in 1988—and ranked 103rd in sibling publication *The American Lawyer's* most recent survey of top-earning firms with \$313 million in gross revenue for fiscal 2014.

Nash has devoted his practice to insurance subrogation litigation—including fire damage litigation and large loss litigation, largely in upstate New York—as well as strategic planning and government relations. When the firm launched Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies LLC, a lobbying subsidiary, in September 2009, Nash headed the New Jersey side of that operation, though he limited himself to advising clients and did not act as a lobbyist.

His standard hourly rate for legal work is \$400, he said, though he declined to predict whether and how that might change at Nash Law Group.

The name implies that Nash will be joined by other attorneys, but no hires are yet planned. He hopes to begin hiring experienced associates as soon as later this year, he said.

"The attorneys that I'm looking to bring in will sort of fit a philosophy of: smart, aggressive and committed to the community," he said.

In making the move, he'll likely leave behind his subrogation book of business, but otherwise is "cautiously optimistic that clients will follow my lead," he said, noting that he wants the new firm to handle matters in other areas, such as land use, regulatory and utilities law.

Despite nearly 29 years at the same law firm, Nash is perhaps best known for his work in the public sector. He previously served on the Cherry Hill Township Council, beginning in 1989, and has been on the Camden County Board of Chosen Freeholders since 1991. He's also been vice chair of the Delaware River Port Authority since 2002.

Nash said he didn't approach Cozen O'Connor about opening a Camden office.

"I don't think Camden was the right fit for Cozen O'Connor," he said, adding that the firm's South Jersey interests are adequately served by the Cherry Hill post.

For his part, Stephen Cozen, founder and chairman of his namesake firm, wished Nash well. In a statement, he said, "Jeff is, without a doubt, one of the nicest people and one of the most proficient lawyers that we have ever had at the firm. While we hate losing him, we're losing him to a good cause. He wants to establish himself as a practitioner in a neighborhood in Camden so he can help people in that neighborhood establish businesses and identify opportunities to help their well-being. We can't look askance at that."

Nash, asked why, at age 57, he would leave what he called "the best law firm in the country," said, "It's simply a matter of following my passion. If I never did it, I would always regret it."

"I don't think I'm going to be the only attorney doing this," he added. "It would not be unusual for law firms to try to follow the companies [moving into Camden]."

Contact the reporter at dgianella@alm.com.

Copyright 2015. ALM Media Properties, LLC. All rights reserved.