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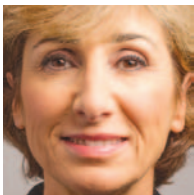
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Spencer Fane enlists more Husch attorneys

by Brian Brown · bbrown@sbj.net

Husch Blackwell LLP's Springfield office continues to lose attorneys to an upstart local competitor and a fellow Kansas City-based law firm.

Spencer Fane Britt & Browne LLP recruited six Husch Blackwell partners in June to launch its own Springfield office, and the new firm has since added four attorneys from Husch. With the hiring of Derek Ankrom a week after the initial partners and Wade Early, Paul Satterwhite and Elizabeth Wenthe in October, Spencer Fane's team has grown to 12 lawyers.

"We've effectively doubled our size in five months," said Richard Walters, managing partner of Spencer Fane's Springfield office, 3259 E. Ridgeview St. "These lawyers were a great fit, and they were in practice areas needed by our clients."



Paul Satterwhite leads Spencer Fane's law and employment group.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Spencer Fane's Springfield office has hired 13 staff members, including 10 attorneys, from Husch Blackwell.
- Husch Blackwell is interviewing for new attorneys.
- Spencer Fane is negotiating on a new lease that would double its office space.

The new Spencer Fane attorneys bring specialties in employment, construction, education and health care law. Three support staff from Husch – Chelsea Fury, Kerry Noe and Cindy Smading – also have joined Spencer Fane as paralegals.

The personnel shuffling changes the landscape of the Springfield area's largest firms. Based on Springfield Business Journal list research, 12 local attorneys makes Spencer Fane the ninth largest firm, and the movement bumps Husch Blackwell from first to fourth. Husch was

See **ATTORNEYS** on page 2

CU SpringNet sale nets \$8M

by Brian Brown · bbrown@sbj.net

The Bluebird gets the worm.

City Utilities of Springfield concluded a three-year process to sell its SpringNet Underground data center with an \$8.4 million deal Dec. 5 to Bluebird Network LLC.

The Columbia-based high-speed data management company offered the highest of three viable buyout bids, surpassing Springfield-based ISG Technology LLC's \$5 million pitch and New York private-equity firm Seaport Capital's \$5.5 million offer.

"You have to do your due-diligence for everybody that's out there, and it met the criteria that we needed to look at somebody to come in and take it on financially," CU General Manager Scott Miller said of Bluebird. "And then it had the best offer."

The deal represents the transfer of CU's physical server racks, cages and associated mechanical equipment, its 82 client contracts and a lease with privately owned Springfield Underground.

The center serves the data storage needs of some of the Springfield area's largest businesses, including CoxHealth, Springfield Public Schools and the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce. Formerly part of CU's broadband division, Miller said SpringNet Underground garnered revenues



Scott Miller: Bluebird Network submitted the highest offer for CU's data center.

of \$3.5 million in fiscal 2014, ending Sept. 30.

CU officials put the data center up for sale after determining it would require millions of dollars in investments for adequate storage space and backup capabilities down the road.

Bluebird Network President and CEO Michael Morey said SpringNet Underground – now officially named Bluebird

Underground – gives the growing broadband provider a new revenue stream with its first external data center.

Bluebird Network maintains two data centers for internal use, but the new division in Springfield represents its first commercial data storage operation. It was an attractive buy for Bluebird, which ranked No. 4,290 on Inc. magazine's 2014 Inc. 5000 with three-year revenue growth of 65 percent, because it complements existing services. The company posted 2013 revenue of \$29.2 million.

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Attorneys: Husch reloads with 3 hires

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ranked No. 1 in 2013 with 25 local lawyers, and it currently employs 15 attorneys, just behind Lowther Johnson Attorneys at Law LLC's 16 attorneys. According to data collected through Aug. 4, Carnahan, Evans, Cantwell & Brown PC and Neale & Newman LLP each employ 19 attorneys.

"Obviously, that's a loss of 10 professionals, but we've hired three new attorneys,"

said Springfield Husch Blackwell partner David Agee, adding the firm's administrators were interviewing potential new hires last week. "We've had a number of practicing attorneys in Springfield contact us, seeking to come to work with us. In summary, we're not missing a beat."

Husch's Springfield office has responded with the hiring of three attorneys: Lisa

Goyer, a greater Chicago-area attorney with DLA Piper; Ken Kingma, a transfer from Husch's St. Louis office; and Shelly Rosenfelder, who had been a Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP teaching fellow at the University of Missouri. Agee said there was no set number of lawyers the firm was hiring, and a fourth hire was in the works as of press time.

"Our goal is not to create any negative impact to Husch Blackwell," Walters added. "We are still very close with several of the lawyers there and care very much about them. This was just about a new and different

opportunity and the excitement to add the Spencer Fane platform here in Springfield."

Now, the Spencer Fane partners are addressing a temporary office that is maxed out.

"We do not have another inch to put another lawyer," Walters said of the 6,000-square-foot office just southeast of Glendale High School.

He said the company is close to signing a lease in south Springfield that is double in size, with an anticipated move by May.

As for the work the new crew is focused on, Ankrom's practice centers on commercial litigation

for religious and educational institutions, health care organizations and clients in the real estate, design, and construction industries. Early is a litigation attorney working in Spencer Fane's labor and employment group, where Satterwhite was named a partner.



David Agee: Husch Blackwell is hiring and has added three attorneys since June.

Wente works in the group as well, but focuses her efforts on counseling issues.

"Spencer Fane has a great reputation for labor and employment law," Satterwhite said, adding he had become familiar with many of the partners by working at Husch – previously, Blackwell Sanders LLP – for 10 years.

Another reason for his move: Satterwhite's wife is a former Spencer Fane attorney.

"She worked in the Kansas City office for several years. I knew the management from Kansas City very well," he said. "I was really looking at what would the next 10 to 15 years look like for the practice of law in Springfield. And from my perspective, Spencer Fane is showing a strong interest in this market by opening this office."

Wente, a three-year Husch attorney, said she was drawn by the offer to advance into a senior associate role and tailor her practice to human resources counseling.

"Looking at the future here, I see this as a nice team with Paul as the partner shepherding us along, Elizabeth doing the client counseling arm and me handling the litigation," said Early, a seven-year veteran of Husch.

Regarding the other two attorneys Spencer Fane in Springfield hired, Walters said one was a recent graduate from the University of Missouri School of Law, and the other was brought on from a firm in Omaha, Neb.

"We anticipated, due to the needs of our clients, that we would be growing when we opened this office, and we've really tried to take the time to get the right lawyers with the right energy and the right expertise and personalities, so that we can all stay aligned in our interest here at the firm," Walters said. "We believe we've been able to achieve that."

Agee, a lawyer since 1980 and Husch partner for 12 years, said he was not recruited by the Spencer Fane partners. He acknowledged several clients followed his former partners, but others were retained by Husch. Agee said the moves are likely revenue neutral, as expenses were reduced with the departure of the lawyers. One of 10 Husch partners working from Hammons Tower, Agee said it's not uncommon for him to be approached by firms seeking to break into the Springfield market, but he's not looking to move.

"Where I'm at is a good place," Agee said.

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