

Newsworthy

Capitol fellas: Former counsels to the governor, Federle Mahoney offers clients an inside-Augusta view

BY SARA DONNELLY

Mainebiz Managing Editor

Today

Two former chief legal counsels to Gov. John Baldacci Photo/David A. Rodgers are using their experience in the State House to help businesses navigate Maine government.

Tom Federle and Mike Mahoney opened the law firm Federle Mahoney in Hallowell in September 2008. Federle Mahoney is a boutique law and government affairs firm — you won't find any criminal or family law here — designed to guide and advocate for businesses in tightly regulated industries. Thanks to the stature of its partners, the firm already has some high-profile clients, including Bangor Hydro Electric Co., Time Warner Cable of Maine and Penn National Gaming. The firm's clients are typically energy or gaming firms who retain the lawyers to help them find funding and research support, understand local, state and federal permitting, and influence legislation.



Tom Federle (left) and Mike Mahoney navigate the ins and outs of Maine government for their business clients

"We're really trying to position ourselves with what we see as the new economy," says Federle, 41, who served as chief legal counsel to the governor from June 2005 to December 2006.

The new economy at Federle Mahoney means, in large part, alternative energy, and their some 15 clients include alternative energy developers Blue-H Technologies of the Netherlands and EOS of Rockland. While both lawyers worked for years in private practice before advising Baldacci, the governor's office provided the training ground for their current work.

"It's a pretty all-consuming position," says Federle of the chief legal counsel job. "You end up providing counsel to all of the Cabinet, fielding stuff from legislators, interfacing with the attorney general. I had described it jokingly at one point as the state's most frightening solo practice because you are really encountering any number of issues that could come across the governor's desk, and typically the stakes are very high and he's dealing with some tight time pressure for guidance."

Both lawyers say their continued correspondence with State House movers and shakers helps their clients understand the latest in legislation that may affect their plans.

For example, Blue-H Technologies, an offshore wind power developer, retained Federle Mahoney to help the company pursue alternative energy off the coast of Maine. Blue-H needs to know how to find a construction partner for the wind turbines, tap stateside financing, work with marine and environmental interests, learn about access to the grid and plans for upgrades to the grid, understand permitting requirements and keep tabs on legislation that could impact its plans.

"This is an example of a company that really has no knowledge of Maine, the people, the process, and needs some understanding of who they can partner with to move this ball forward," says Mahoney, 36, who worked for the governor from January 2007 to September 2008. "So much of [business development] is local, so much of it is the people."

For their lobbying and legal services, Federle Mahoney charges a flat fee, not the hourly fee common at larger firms, and the partners say defining their price up-front has helped them attract clients despite the recession. The first-year projected revenue for Federle Mahoney is just under \$1 million.

"The lesson learned from the governor's office is a good economic opportunity involves, necessarily, hundreds of people in the state," says Federle.

"And the converse of that is true," adds Mahoney. "It was amazing to see how good, solid ideas could get lost in the shuffle because people who were supporting those ideas didn't have a good understanding of the playing field. That's legal, that's political, that's regulatory."

[Send A Comment](#)

©2009 New England Business Media