

KEVIN COYNE

Facilitating Solutions in Commercial Real Estate and Naperville

by Dave Argentar

In a time when acrimony, division and incivility can appear ascendant—and common ground and compromise often seem elusive—Kevin M. Coyne forges a different path. Coyne's roles as both an experienced real estate attorney and a Naperville city councilman are about bringing people together, identifying mutual interests and reaching resolutions that reap benefits for all involved.

It is an aptitude he demonstrated well before he was closing multimillion-dollar transactions or navigating the currents of municipal governance.

“When I was a kid, all my friends and I were really into collecting and trading baseball cards,” Coyne recalls. “It sort of molded me for what I do today—a lot of negotiation, a little one-upmanship and just trying to reach a deal that worked for everybody.”

Coyne is still very much a baseball fan, but the leader of the 18-attorney real estate practice group at Chuhak & Tecson, P.C. now leverages his talents and insights in the service of clients needing sophisticated representation for complex commercial real estate matters.

In this arena, Coyne's ability to find big-picture solutions is complemented by a meticulous attention to small details, a combination that has earned him the trust and confidence of industry players throughout the Chicago area.

“If a client of mine is purchasing real estate, I will always refer them to Kevin if they don't have representation,” says Jason Nagel, senior vice president at Naperville Bank & Trust and a commercial lender who has worked with Coyne for over 15 years.

“Kevin has a common-sense approach to conflict resolution, overall knowledge of the law, and attention to detail that gives him the ability to identify potential problems and address them on the front end so deals close quickly and efficiently while still ensuring that everyone's interests are protected,” Nagel says.

BUSINESS AND POLITICS

A child of the Midwest, Coyne was born in Chicago but raised by his single mom in a blue-collar neighborhood in Cedar Rapids,



Iowa among close friends he still keeps in touch with. The self-described “below-average center fielder” grew up in the 1980s, immersing himself in the pop-culture staples of the time and solidifying his lifelong love of the Chicago Cubs.

“We all were into *Ghostbusters* and *Star Wars* and sports,” Coyne remembers. “I'm still a huge *Star Wars* fanatic, and it's been a kick getting my daughter hooked on it as well.”

When not playing baseball, working at his local Target, or hanging out and playing cards with his buddies, Coyne spent time during high school honing his interests in reading, writing, business and negotiating. Growing up surrounded by the quadrennial circus of the Iowa presidential caucuses, he also developed an affinity for politics.

“Looking back, I can see the seeds of how I would spend my professional life in both the law and in public service,” Coyne says. “Business and politics were always present in my life in some way.”

After two years in junior college, Coyne

transferred to the University of Iowa, where he attended business school and earned his degree in accounting with a minor in English. He recalls one class that played to the strengths of that left brain/right brain combination and confirmed his inclination to pursue a career in the law.

“I took a business policy class where we had to develop and present an actual business plan,” Coyne says. “The public speaking, writing, persuasive and strategic aspects of that exercise were much more in my wheelhouse than straight-up advanced accounting, and they made me confident that law school was the right next step.”

Coyne returned to Chicago for law school, earning his degree from DePaul University College of Law. He clerked at law firms throughout his time at DePaul and spent a semester working for then-U.S. Senator Peter Fitzgerald. The direction of his legal career also came into greater focus.

“I enjoyed the real estate and property courses and saw that as the direction I wanted

to pursue,” he recalls. “I like working with clients and the other side to achieve a common goal. I much prefer an ‘everybody wins’ result rather than an adversarial approach.”

Mike Magliano, senior director, brokerage services at Cushman & Wakefield, certainly appreciates the talent for facilitation and problem-solving Coyne has demonstrated during the 10 years they’ve worked together.

“Unlike a lot of lawyers, Kevin is about bringing people to the table,” Magliano says. “While protecting his clients’ interests is always paramount, he has a business mentality and understands that considering the perspectives and interests of all involved in a transaction, rather than just saying ‘I’m right and you’re wrong,’ can be instrumental in getting a deal done.”

HOME, WORK AND SERVICE

Coyne’s first job after law school brought him to Naperville, where he would go on to build his practice, start his family and strengthen his community.

After spending his first couple of years of practice preparing hundreds of tax returns and handling a similar number of residential real estate closings, Coyne took a leap and formed a firm with an estate planning attorney who needed a skilled real estate hand to serve her high net worth client base.

The experience of running a firm, a practice and a business left a valuable impression on him, he says, that continues to add value for his clients.

“Understanding how management responsibilities and day-to-day operations can take so much time and mental energy away from actually doing your job gave me a deep appreciation of the stressors my business clients are constantly facing,” Coyne says.

“That, in turn, made me focus even more on ensuring that I was doing whatever I could in my role as an attorney and adviser to make my clients’ lives easier.”

One way Coyne accomplishes that goal is through being accessible when his clients need him and understanding what they are looking for him to achieve.

“I can pick up the phone and call Kevin with an urgent question or issue and know in advance that he will be all over it,” says Christina Caton Kitchel, director of leasing at Caton Commercial Real Estate Group.

“Working with him is a true collaboration, and everything Kevin does is with the client’s end goal in mind. We have enough roadblocks to deal with, and we can always rely on Kevin to be part of the solution.”

Coyne further expanded his perspective by returning to law school after five years

of practice to earn his LL.M. in commercial real estate from The John Marshall Law School, further solidifying his transition from a primarily residential real estate focus to a commercial one.

While earning that degree, Coyne joined another suburban firm where he gained a wealth of experience facilitating a wide range of commercial property transactions, including the representation of national franchises, restaurants, bars and professional practices. He was deeply involved in the negotiation of office, retail and industrial leases on the national and local levels for both landlords and tenants.

During these years, the wild fluctuations in the economy generally and the struggles in the real estate market, in particular, had a significant impact on Coyne’s clients and brought into sharp relief how sudden and unexpected reversals of fortune could be.

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attorneys in the space of a year,” Coyne remembers. “It reinforced the importance of caution, prudence and an appreciation of the risks inherent in commercial property transactions.”

Even with the Great Recession in the rear-view mirror, Coyne still looks through the lens of that experience when providing counsel to clients contemplating sizeable real estate investments.

“Entrepreneurs by their nature tend to be optimistic, which is a good and indispensable quality to have,” Coyne notes. “But when you sign things like personal guarantees, you need to go into it with eyes wide open and a full understanding of what’s on the line if things outside of your control go south. Painting that picture and putting in structures that can protect my clients in such an event is a core element of what I do.”

While continuing to expand his practice, Coyne became extremely active in the Naperville community, serving on Naperville’s

Planning and Zoning Commission.

“It was a wonderful way of gaining insights into the considerations and decision-making process of the municipalities that can have so much impact on the success or failure of a project,” Coyne notes.

Coyne also immersed himself in a range of civic and philanthropic endeavors. The rewards of those volunteer efforts included meeting his wife, Kim, while they were both giving their time to the Naperville Jaycees. The two have a daughter, Charlotte, who loves playing soccer under the enthusiastic and supportive eye of her dad.

Coyne’s involvement with the Jaycees included running the “Last Fling,” the organization’s annual festival and biggest fundraiser. In that role, Coyne’s deft negotiating skills and his experience guiding clients through challenging financial times were both called upon.

“I once had a national rock act threaten not to go on stage because a specific color of Gatorade as required in his contract rider wasn’t in his dressing room, and I had a year where thunderstorms essentially washed us out,” he recalls. “Fortunately, we were able to resolve both situations positively.”

CITY COUNCIL AND A CITY FIRM

Coyne’s commitment to Naperville ultimately led him to run for and win a seat on the city council in 2015. He takes great pride in his community, both in the way residents so actively come together for the common good and the manner in which its elected representatives bridge differences and get things done without the rancor and personal hostility seen elsewhere in politics.

“We are pretty evenly divided politically but work very well together,” Coyne says. “Some of the extremism you may see elsewhere just isn’t an issue here.”

While Coyne’s bonds with Naperville run deep, 2018 brought an unexpected career opportunity that now takes him daily down the Eisenhower Expressway into the Loop. He joined Chuhak & Tecson as a principal to take the helm of the firm’s growing real estate practice group.

“I would never have predicted working downtown, but I was so impressed with the firm and the attorneys that it was a no-brainer,” Coyne says.

“The depth and breadth of the talent and abilities here are unrivaled in my opinion, and they provide my clients with powerful support and resources. It also doesn’t hurt that everyone here is so incredibly cordial. This has got to be the friendliest group of people I’ve ever worked with.” ■