



A Win/Win Situation

REAL ESTATE LAWYER
JAMES LONERGAN
IS COMMITTED TO
HELPING HIS CLIENTS
COME OUT ON TOP

By Barrett Baker

James “JB” Lonergan began his career with Pender & Coward more than 35 years ago. At the time, the firm didn’t have nearly the 40-plus attorneys that are on staff today, but they wanted to be able to represent their clients in all areas of the law. “When I first started with my law firm, we were more heavily weighted with litigation attorneys,” says Lonergan. “There wasn’t an attorney in the firm that focused on real estate, so I moved into that niche and have been doing that ever since.”

Real estate attorneys apply their legal skills to matters related to property transactions—either residential or commercial. Real estate transactions can run the whole spectrum, from straight-forward to extremely complicated. It’s the real estate attorney’s job to make sure the transaction is handled properly and the client gets the result he or she is expecting.

For example, once title work has been done by a title insurance company, a real estate attorney will sit down with his or her client to review the results of the search, explain the history of the

property and discuss whether there are any issues that need to be addressed. “Most of what I do these days involves commercial transactions in which I represent the buyer, the seller or the lender,” says Lonergan. “People are often surprised to hear lenders need lawyers, but I do a lot of lender representation.”

For Lonergan, the best part of his job is the satisfaction of handling a transaction properly, and, of course, getting his clients the outcome they desire. “Real estate is a little different than other areas of the law, in the sense that other areas of the law, by definition, can be very contentious,” he says. “For example, when it comes to litigation, one party will always win and one party will always lose. In real estate, it’s more of a collaborative effort where the buyer, the seller and the lender—or in a lease situation, the landlord and the tenant—are all generally working toward the same end—to get the transaction completed. Of course, you have to represent your client to make sure their interests are being properly protected, but it’s much more of a win/win situation versus what happens in litigation where someone is going to come out on the short end.”

Some people might think that reading through lengthy contracts with potentially complicated scenarios might be a bit tedious, but Lonergan loves his job and values providing great representation for his clients. “I would say that if you’re going to be a good real estate attorney, first of all you need to have a lot of attention to detail, because there are multiple documents that need to be reviewed, and there are a lot of aspects of the transaction that need to be properly handled. Second, to be successful as a real estate attorney—and probably most areas of the law for that matter—you need to be responsive to the needs of your clients. Years ago, we used to have a rule that attorneys should return client telephone calls within 24 hours. Now, with cell phones and the internet, that timeframe is much more compressed. When a client calls now, they generally want a response right away. And I think we do an excellent job of representing our clients.”

Visit CoVaMag.com to read
“Reclaiming The Land”
by Barrett Baker.



MAGAZINE | FEBRUARY 2020

AS SEEN IN THE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020 ISSUES OF

THE Business Magazine Of Coastal Virginia
CoVaBIZ
CoVaBizMag.com

Coastal
VIRGINIA
Magazine
CoVaMag.com

