

EXECUTIVE PROFILE:

Jerry Pesick

partner, Steinhardt Pesick & Cohen PC

Jerry Pesick was just a kid when he decided to become a lawyer. In those less-cynical times, he was certain the profession could make things better for people.

Now, as a partner with Southfield-based Steinhardt Pesick & Cohen PC, Pesick is convinced that his work does help people, especially those who battle government – either to build on their property or to protect their property from a government taking.

“Often people come to us in a survival mode,” said Pesick, a specialist in eminent domain, land use, condemnation and property taxation.

Pesick was at the center of what is considered the largest eminent domain case in Michigan history: A Wayne County Circuit Court jury awarded his client, Detroit Plaza LP, a \$25 million verdict after the city of Detroit filed condemnation proceedings to take 6.3 vacant acres on the Detroit River as part of a proposed waterfront reclamation and casino project.

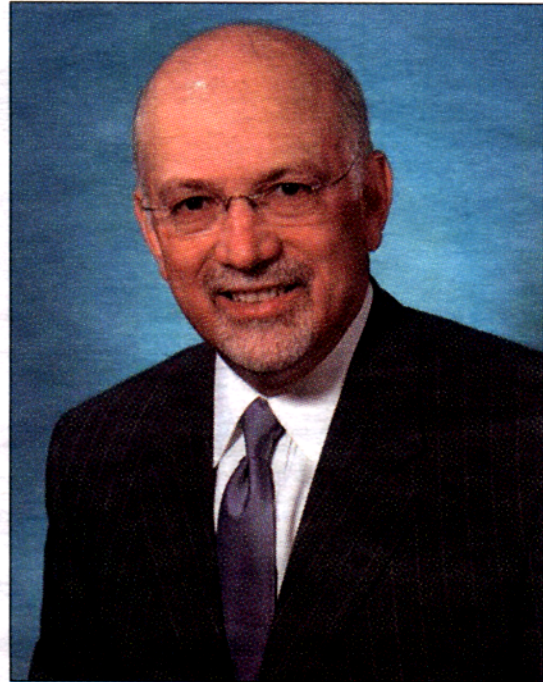
The city had offered only \$13.7 million for the land.

The 26-year legal veteran sees government’s attitude growing more aggressive, particularly as local governments scramble to secure or prevent development.

“Some people who run for local elected positions have extreme views,” he said. “Lots of boards are split. We are seeing a lot of bold stuff. They want a tremendous amount of control over projects.”

Most recently, Pesick and Cohen led the defense of a family trust as the City of Novi proposed to condemn land for a new road around the Novi Road/Grand River Avenue intersection.

“They can’t use economic development as a reason for public purpose,” he said. “The pure economic development argument is not going to be a satisfactory basis anymore.”



After college, Pesick – who had an equal interest in government – went to work for Fred Steinhardt and Walter Mason, who were already known for their land use and property rights work.

The firm evolved, as did some of its focus on land use and eminent domain, and grew to more than 20 attorneys.

Pesick remained at the law firm until 2000, when he and the late Steinhardt decided to leave and form their own firm to continue practicing the specialties he loves most. The firm includes Pesick, Adam Cohen, Jason Long and David Nykanen.

“We wanted to get back to a smaller, boutique-type of firm,” Pesick said.

INSIGHTS

Guiding principle: The clients’ best interests come first and foremost.

Mentor: The late Frederick Steinhardt, my first employer and partner of 22 years.

How do you motivate people: Never ask them to do anything I either haven’t done or wouldn’t do myself. Being available to advise and offer encouragement with assignments.

Goal yet to be achieved: Effectuating needed change in Michigan law to better protect property owners in eminent domain proceedings.

Advice: Ability alone will not allow you to achieve success in the legal profession. Hard work and desire are equally, and probably more, important ingredients.

JUDGMENT CALLS

Best business decision: Leaving my old law firm in 2000 to start up my current boutique law firm specializing in eminent domain, land use and property tax appeals.

Worst business decision: Being convinced to hire employees that my instincts told me would not be successful.

Biggest management myth: That a good résumé makes for a successful employee.

Word that best describes you: Serious.

CONFESSIONS

What keeps you up at night: Making sure no

Education: Bachelor of arts, University of Michigan; J.D. degree, University of Detroit School of Law.

Residence: West Bloomfield.

Family: Wife, Marianne; sons, Jason, 21, and Daniel, 18.

stone is left unturned when preparing a case.

Pet peeve: Lawyers who make work and expenses for clients by unnecessarily grinding files.

Guilty pleasure: Leaving work early on occasion to play golf.

Person most interested in meeting: Lance Armstrong.

Three greatest passions: My family, work, sports.

First choice for a new career: Very happy doing what I’m doing.

TREASURES

Favorite cause: Cancer research and treatment facilities.

Most influential book: “John Adams,” by David McCullough.

Favorite restaurant: Rochester Chop House.

Favorite way to spend time: Golf, running, traveling.

Automobile: BMW 530i.

■ Joanne Maliszewski