

Off the Clock

by Autumn C. Giusti

Age: 57

Family: wife, Janice; daughters, Margot, 37, Cortney, 33, Cristina, 26

Education: bachelor's degree in sociology, Monmouth University; juris doctor, Seton Hall University School of Law

Day job: construction attorney with Gibbons PC in Newark, N.J.

Hometown: Oceanport, N.J., in Monmouth County. "Bruce Springsteen is also from Monmouth County and still lives here."

As a veteran construction attorney, Robbie MacPherson is watching the industry undergo a major evolution.

Green building standards are becoming more stringent, and contractors and their attorneys are bracing for change.

As chairman of the American Bar Association Forum on the Construction Industry, MacPherson assembled a team of experts in New Orleans last month, taking the conference in a new direction with a focus on energy, sustainability and green building challenges affecting the industry.

Green building is on the rise. What does this mean for construction lawyers?

A lot of building codes are requiring green construction. So you'll see things like incorporating green materials, reducing waste. Contractors, designers and owners all have to focus on green, renewable energy. It covers how you design a building so there's more natural light, how you locate a building to take advantage of airflows, traffic flows, mass transit and reducing energy.

Is green just a trend?

I think it's picking up steam. Everybody understands you've got to do something about energy — energy consumption and generating new sources of energy. I think it's here to stay. The economics are such that we're kind of forced into it, and it makes sense. A green building that has more natural light is a better building to work in. And if you're saving money on energy, you can put more money into other amenities.

Then where do you see green construction in five to 10 years?

I wish I knew. The whole energy issue is going to impact us. We're certainly going to see issues with wind turbine construction off the coast of this country. There's a lot of controversy about the impact on wildlife, shipping.

So why New Orleans for this year's forum?

We were here (in past years) for Jazz Fest and French Quarter Festival, and our members like both events. After Katrina, we wanted to come back to New Orleans as soon as we could, but our forums were booked through 2008. This was the soonest we could come back.

What's your favorite New Orleans food?

Anything here is good. One of the best meals I had here

was at K-Paul's. I also enjoyed (Restaurant) August and Arnaud's. •