

Monday, May 7, 2012

Tag Team

By Jim Cronin, *Banker & Tradesman Staff Writer*



Mary Guay and Stephanie Aitchison have recently been made co-managers of the leasing and operations department at Cummings Center in Beverly. They jointly oversee client relations with the almost 550 tenants at the North Shore business center.

Guay has been with Cummings Properties for about a year. She started her career with the Massachusetts Division of Insurance, where she worked for 23 years and ended her tenure as deputy commissioner of administration for the agency. While there, she selected new office spaces for multiple agency relocations, among other duties.

Aitchison started working at Cummings in 2004 after a brief stint as a paralegal out of college. She found she was well equipped for the property leasing and management world given her law experience.

What have been the biggest challenges taking on your new roles?

Guay: Currently, we're facing the challenges of splitting the responsibilities and co-managing quite a lot. We certainly don't want to be duplicating efforts. With each week it's becoming clearer to us. It's very different for me because I'm now on the other side of the table. [At the division of Insurance overseeing relocations] I was the customer, the one making demands. Now I'm on the other side of it and really have an appreciation of what landlords go through. You need to understand what the client is saying and also what they're not saying, what they might be unable to articulate when they come in looking for space. They

might not have yet defined their needs. It's a different dynamic altogether.

What are some of the goals of creating the new roles?

Aitchison: Part of the goal is to improve upon some things that weren't happening before, things like having Mary meet with every client in person ... to have another person creating a deeper relationship with the clients. We're very creative. I've seen us respond to the changes in the economy. We are very active in a down economy and have taken on a lot of new challenges. So we've adapted in many ways ... to what the clients' needs are. We're very proactive in fulfilling our clients' needs.

Are there new ways of operating, either your own work styles or from the company's methods?

Guay: Personally, I really need to establish with key accounts and clients I'm not that familiar with. For me, it's really carving out face time with clients I need to meet. That's my immediate goal. **Aitchison:** My new goals are to make sure we're providing appropriate and sufficient guidance to our newest employees. Some of our account managers are fairly new. So we need to make sure the whole group is operating smoothly as a team.

Five Things Guay And Aitchison Love About Cummings Center:

The small-town, community-feel of the campus of almost 550 businesses.

The convenience of visiting doctors, the bank, convenience store or dry cleaners, or just going for a scenic walk around the ponds without leaving the campus.

The "green" management mentality where almost nothing is ever trash and major construction projects, like the largest collection of solar arrays on the North Shore, are just another day's work.

Cummings Properties' preservation of the campus' rich history and impact on the city.

Working with people who all take pride in making Cummings Center a beautiful and well respected location for businesses on the North Shore.