

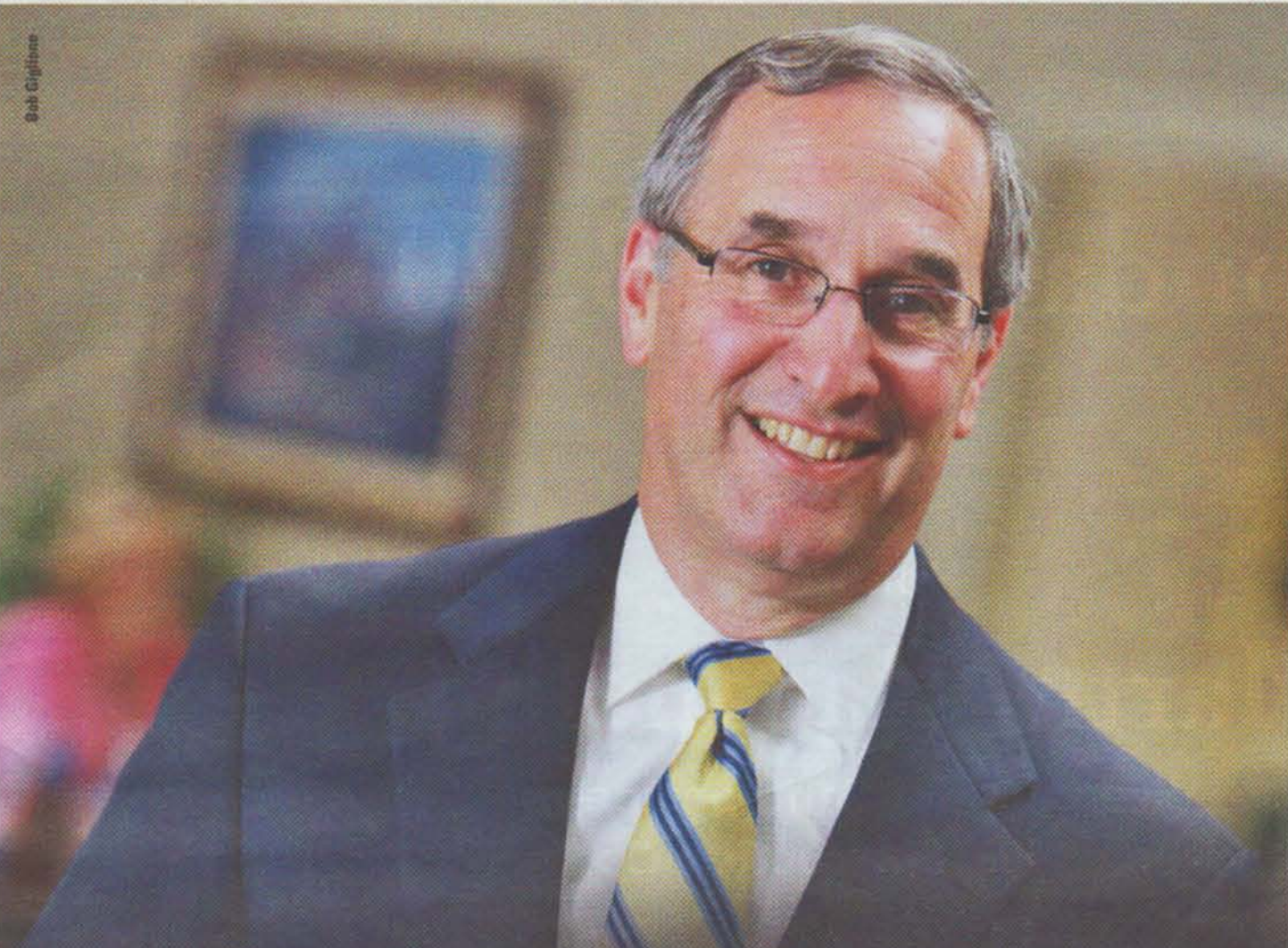
Long Island Business NEWS



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5A

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Bob Cigliano



RISK MANAGEMENT

How First of Long Island became the best little bank in America

By **CLAUDE SOLNIK**

Headquartered in a trim white building with green shutters, just across the street from the hardware store in downtown Glen Head, First of Long Island exudes the feel of the friendly, drop-on-by neighborhood bank where, as its slogan suggests, "everyone knows your name."

Don't be fooled. With 36 branches and \$2 billion in assets, First of Long Island is no longer so small. And

if your credit isn't close to perfect, it can be something less than friendly.

Which might be why it's consistently called one of the best-run banks in America.

"We followed the fundamentals," CEO Michael Vittorio said of the financial firm, whose first quarter 2013 earnings jumped an imposing 9.5 percent to \$5.6 million. "We always understood credit risk is the No. 1 risk you manage."

See **BANK, 68A**

AA Technology eyes Trade Zone expansion plan

By **JOHN CALLEGARI**

AA Technology, a 52-employee maker of circuit boards for everything from computers to fire trucks, is planning to build a 35,000-square-foot facility in Islip's Foreign Trade Zone, making room to double its workforce.

The firm, a trade zone tenant since 2004, is negotiating with Islip Town officials on a 40-year ground lease of 3.5 acres, with construction to follow before the firm's current lease expires next August.

The company anticipates adding up to 60 workers at the new facility.

The expansion plan comes as AA Technology sees steady growth in its circuit assembly business but a shortage of leasable space in the zone, which enjoys 95 percent occupancy. The land deal would leave the town

See **EXPANSION, 70A**

Gov't, banks back to work on foreclosures

Legal floodgates reopen as Sandy-related moratoriums expire

By **CLAUDE SOLNIK**

Foreclosures are expected to spike on Long Island in coming months as properties protected by moratoriums stemming from Hurricane Sandy storm back into the legal process.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac ended a temporary ban on foreclosures in Nassau and Suffolk counties on April 30.

Voluntary foreclosure moratoriums at banks like Wells Fargo followed suit, setting up a coming wave of legal actions against delinquent homeowners.

See **FORECLOSURES, 71A**

REAL ESTATE
Inter-County rises in Babylon **7A**

SMALL BUSINESS
Spreading good cheer **21A**

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FRANK ROSSELLI
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Expansion: AA growing

From 1A

with two parcels totaling about 4.5 acres.

AA Technology co-founder and vice president Frank Rosselli declined to comment on the proposed deal, but acknowledged his firm is seeking to expand. However, Jaime Martinez, deputy director of the zone, confirmed early-stage negotiations are under way with the company.

"We have so many people who come in looking for space as a way to downsize, so for them to want to grow their business here is just amazing," she said.

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HERE IS JUST AMAZING

AA Technology, which originally leased 7,500 square feet in the zone, upgraded to 15,000 feet in 2007. The firm opened discussions with the town late last year.

As a Foreign Trade Zone tenant, AA Technology is not subject to property taxes and has a reduced tax burden on certain goods it imports and exports.

Nonetheless, the expansion is a "risky, risky business," Rosselli said.

The 52-acre trade zone was created in 1982 and is Long Island's sole authorized site where foreign and domestic merchandise is considered to be in duty-free international commerce. The zone is currently home to 435,000 square feet of commercial space, the bulk of it controlled by Hauppauge's Staller Associates.

Suffolk County officials, backed by U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, have applied to the U.S. Department of Commerce to create additional trade zones on Long Island.

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Law: Firms jockeying for global position

From 5A

experts Scully, Scott, Murphy & Presser have their own IPG and a track record across Europe and Japan.

Even small firms are wising up to international opportunities. Miller Place criminal defense attorney John Ray and his chief associate, native Bulgarian Vess Mitev, this week met with Russian lawyers to discuss the formation of an international practice with offices in the European capitals of Sofia, Bulgaria, and Stockholm, Sweden.

Ray and his associates "love what we do domestically, but if you don't expand, you contract. We have these nice opportunities and connections over there, and people who speak the languages.

"We're European-oriented," the attorney added. "We just never tried to turn that into money."

Bottom lines are a primary concern at the bigger firms, too, which like Ray count such factors as personal foreign connections and foreign-tongue fluency as major advantages. Cooper cited Ruskin Moscou staffers who speak Russian, French and Hebrew, plus others "who've spent a lot of time in the BRIC countries."

With those footholds in Brazil, Russia, India and China, plus other global economic centers, the Ruskin Moscou IPG has a running start, what Cooper termed "a very deep skill set" including business-formation efforts, antitrust work and more. It's a long list, he noted, topped by Vivian Breier, the Corporate Securities Group partner and IPG co-chair who's actually on her second Ruskin Moscou tour.

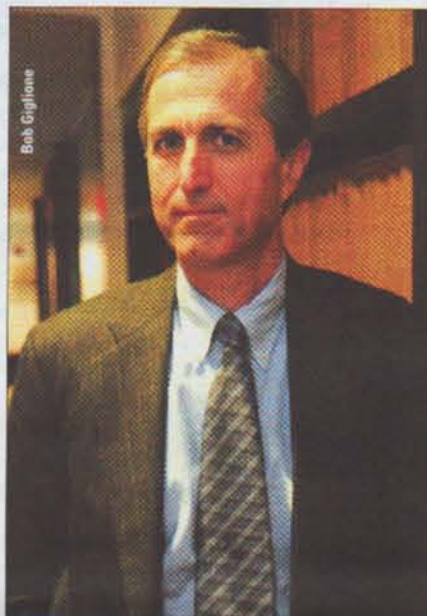
Breier left nearly 11 years ago for various corporate adventures that filled her Rolodex with business and law contacts throughout Europe and Asia. As general counsel for Ronkonkoma-based data-solutions provider Aperio CI, she helped established what's known as a wholly owned foreign entity – in this case, a Beijing field office – with help from various Chinese consultants.

Those experiences gave her a new global perspective, and upon returning to Ruskin Moscou, Breier felt it was critical to spread word of the firm's international exploits.

"We needed to feature everything the firm's been doing," she said. "This is the way of the world now. You have a website, and boom – you're your own international

marketplace."

The new IPG will feature existing staffers – Cooper said the firm plans no new positions or hires – and enters a crowded field of U.S. firms dipping their toes in international waters. Leanne Pfautz, director of the American Bar Association's Section of International Law, cited some 24,000 section members jockeying for position in an "increasingly global" law-scape.



JOHN BAUER: Attorneys need to be fluent in international tax laws and nation-specific rules governing lawyers.

"It's not an insular world anymore," Pfautz noted. "That's definitely reflected by the fact that our membership grows every year."

While they hail largely from the East and West coasts, members of the Section of International Law come from all U.S. regions. Pfautz pointed to large concentrations in Chicago, South Dakota and Kentucky, for instance.

"You don't normally think of Kentucky as 'international,'" she noted.

But the Internet and easy international communications have, in some ways, blurred national borders.

"It's increasingly important to know different international applications of all kinds of law," Pfautz said, citing "public law" covering treaties and international criminal courts and "private law" regarding corporate transactions like mergers and acquisitions.

Little Mendelson doesn't have a European office, according to John Bauer, managing shareholder of the Melville office, but it's played the international game for two decades through partnerships with foreign professional service providers, including lawyers.

The firm helps U.S. clients navigate laws in other countries, and through its Immigration Practice Group provides visa and other immigration-related services to international clients coming here.

The Long Island office often represents American clients with international issues, and from those experiences Bauer has gleaned one particular lesson: Any lawyer staking an international claim had better understand more than just the local customs. Particular challenges include international tax laws and nation-specific rules regulating legal services, he noted.

"There are some countries where you can't have a wholly owned office – you can only have a relationship with a local firm," Bauer said. "Knowing the rules in the different countries is something our firm deals with on a regular basis."

Citing Ruskin Moscou's existing international acumen, Cooper is confident in his firm's ability to help foreign clients succeed here and domestic clients succeed there. Still, Ruskin Moscou is taking particular care in its selection of foreign partners.

"We're not going to practice law in jurisdictions where we're not admitted to practice, so an oversight function on behalf of our clients is very important," Cooper said. "It's critical we make certain the networks we develop are carefully vetted."

Ruskin Moscou has no plans to open foreign offices, he added, although he can picture a near future in which the firm has multiplied its strategic global partnerships. "We have some of those relationships already," Cooper said. "Now we're focused on using them and expanding them."

And by "expanding," of course, he means "cashing in," just like other firms stretching toward distant lands.

"We're greedy," noted Ray, the Miller Place attorney planning the Bulgarian invasion. "We love money, and we're trying to get some."

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Northwind: 530 units in the works

From 5A

new condo and rental communities like those being built by Tsunis & Co.

"They tend to go from single-family homes to these multifamily developments," Pally said, "which is why many of our builders are building them."

Another reason: Senior housing is the path of least resistance for developers who seek zoning changes and the approvals of elected officials and local civics, since they place no additional burden on schools while enhancing the tax base. Local merchants also generally welcome over-55 projects, since they generate added shoppers.

John Rose, who owns the Starbucks property next door to Northwind's proposed rental development in

Selden, and the Cella Bagels across the street, said he and other merchants are looking forward to a future ribbon-cutting.

"There are more than 30 local businesses within a short walk and they rely on walk-in traffic," he said.

The local community has rejected a few proposals, including a Lowe's home improvement store, for the vacant lot that has become a favorite with vagrants and vandals.

"I'm hoping there will be more support to build something useful," Rose said. "There's nothing more useful than having a place for seniors to live as opposed to having them leave the area."

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JIM TSUNIS: During the recession, Northwind put properties into contract, awaiting approvals.