

## **Weissman Nowack boosts collections practice**

By Meredith Hobbs, Staff Reporter



Weissman, Nowack, Curry & Wilco has beefed up the collections side of its community association practice in response to the recession. "It is one of the most important aspects of our practice right now for our association clients, because of the high number of foreclosures and bankruptcies," said Julie M. Howard, who runs the firm's 10-lawyer community association practice.

Community associations use the money from member assessments to maintain common areas in condominiums and subdivisions. In condominiums, that includes the lobby, elevators, parking area, landscaping, amenities such as swimming pools, and insurance for the building structure, said Howard.

Weissman Nowack has hired a lawyer and a manager with commercial collections experience, she said, to help its community association clients take the most efficient approach to getting people to pay.

John P. Farrell joins the firm as of counsel from a Duluth collections firm, Riexinger & Associates, to head the collections effort for the community association practice. Howard said Farrell started his career with collections firm Frederick J. Hanna & Associates. Suzanna Bajger joins from the Florida firm Becker & Poliakoff, where she was collections and client manager. She is managing Weissman Nowack's paralegal team for collections.

Howard said her community association clients are having increasing difficulty with members not paying their assessments. "It's huge right now," she said.

"It's been building and seems to be at its worst at this point," she added, pointing out the high rates of foreclosures and bankruptcies in Georgia. "The only money that associations have is from the assessments. They have to have a way to collect."

Howard said community associations' troubles getting members to pay their assessments cuts across all income brackets and is affecting association clients in Savannah and the mountains as well as Atlanta.

Stephen P. Riexinger of Riexinger & Associates was not available for comment by press time. Alan S. Becker of Becker & Poliakoff also was not available for comment.