

MASSACHUSETTS Lawyers Weekly

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SEPTEMBER 20, 2024

Mayoral bid triggers transition in Boston firm's leadership

■ PAT MURPHY

A Boston attorney has announced he's running for mayor of Newton, causing a shuffle at the top of the business litigation boutique he co-founded nearly 30 years ago.



Marc C. Laredo

On Sept. 10, Marc C. Laredo declared his mayoral run, a week after Laredo & Smith revealed management-level changes at the eight-attorney firm that anticipated the launch of Laredo's campaign in the November 2025 election.

"I am committed to working full time at the firm throughout the campaign," Laredo says. "I'm fully engaged in the practice of law and will continue to be. If elected, I will need to give up my practice. If I'm not elected, I've told my part-

ners I'm coming back to work the next day."

Laredo says he had been thinking about running for a long time, but with the youngest of his three children now attending the University of Michigan, he decided to take the leap.

"From a family perspective, this is the right time for me to devote to a campaign and the right time for serving as mayor," he says. "I've decided to seize that opportunity."

The law firm announced that



Matthew A. Kane

Matthew A. Kane would succeed Laredo as managing partner on Jan. 1. Meanwhile, partner Payal Salsburg has joined Kane as a member of the firm's management team. In conjunction with those changes, the firm has rebranded to Laredo, Smith & Kane.



Payal Salsburg

Laredo co-founded the firm in April 1996. All the while, the business litigator has been knee-deep in Newton politics. He's the current president of Newton City Council, serving his seventh term as councilor-at-large from Ward 7. Prior to joining the City Council, Laredo was on the Newton School Committee for eight years, eventually chairing the board.

With his trajectory in local politics, it's perhaps not surprising that Laredo would one day have his eye on the Mayor's Office. In fact, according to Kane, for the past half-year the firm has been preparing for Laredo to step down as managing partner.

"But I've been a full equity partner with Marc at Laredo & Smith since 2018, so the conver-

sations about succession planning have been inherent and ongoing since then,” Kane says.

Kane likes Laredo’s chances.

“It’s a natural choice for him and the residents of the city of Newton,” Kane says. “I think he’s going to win.”

Meanwhile, Laredo and Kane are busy implementing the firm’s transition plan.

“Here, I’ve had the opportunity to shadow Marc [in his role as managing partner] for years,” Kane says. “Because we have a relatively small number of equity partners, important management decisions are sort of made by consensus anyway. When it comes to the day-to-day [operations], Marc and I put together a playbook years ago that addresses everything from the mundane – like lists of vendors – to employee and salary information. That playbook can pass from one person to the next, maintaining continuity and making the transition relatively straightforward.”

In a sense, Kane says the firm is simply following the advice regularly given to clients.

“[Transition planning] is a hot topic for our clients, as well,”

Kane says. “I hope our clients will follow our example.”

A Democrat himself, Laredo doesn’t know if he might be facing off against an incumbent Democrat in the 2025 mayoral election, which is a non-partisan affair. If there are three or more candidates, a primary in September 2025 will decide the top two candidates advancing to the November election. In 2018, Ruthanne Fuller became the first woman mayor in Newton’s history. Now in her second term, Fuller has said in published reports she won’t make a decision about running for a third term until after the November 2024 election.

“I like Mayor Fuller a lot. She’s a terrific person. She’s worked very hard,” Laredo says. “I think it’s time for different leadership, that’s all. But I say that with respect and admiration for her.”

Laredo believes he will be in a stronger position to help the people of Newton than he would be if he stayed on the City Council.

“Under the city charter, we have a strong mayoral system, which means the mayor has considerable authority over budget and managing the day-to-day

affairs of the city,” Laredo says. “The City Council president in Newton is not like the speaker of the House in terms of being able to direct everything.”

As for his leadership style, Laredo plans to adhere to the client-service model he’s cultivated at Laredo & Smith.

“At this law firm, we return phone calls and emails promptly. We try to be exceptionally responsive to our clients,” he says. “That’s what you need to do as the mayor.”

He’s also a big believer in consensus building.

“You don’t have to get everything you want to be successful,” he says. “It’s far better to build consensus to get 75 percent of what you want with 75 percent of the people on board with that.”

In terms of priorities, Laredo says education will top the list.

“I am passionate about education,” he says. “We have a good system and a great superintendent, which is critical. My second priority is basic infrastructure. Roads and sidewalks are what people complain about the most. Frankly, that’s something we can be much better on.”