

COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

Porter Wright getting new managing partner

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Reporter
Columbus Business First

The second-biggest law firm in Columbus soon will have a new managing partner.

Bob Tannous will take over for Robert “Buzz” Trafford at Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP. Trafford has led the firm’s Columbus office for 18 years. Tannous has been chief operating officer since 2009.

Trafford has been involved in some of the area’s most high-profile cases during his tenure, including representing Columbus City Schools during its ongoing data scandal. He also chaired the Columbus Symphony Orchestra in the mid-2000s during its financial problems.

Trafford, 62, said he wants to spend more time practicing and trying cases.

“Bob is completely ready to take this on,” he said.

Tannous, 52, joined Porter Wright straight out of the Ohio State University Moritz College of



Bob Tannous is taking over as managing partner at Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP.

Law in 1987. The firm created a COO role for him in 2009 in part to prep him to replace Trafford.

“It was the worst-kept secret on staff,” Trafford said of the Monday announcement of the succession.

Some of Tannous’ corporate work includes Columbus-area business stalwarts DSW Inc. (NYSE:DSW)

and Crane Group plus oil and gas clients.

Tannous will be firm’s third managing partner when he takes over at the start of 2015. The firm was founded in 1846 – it is the second oldest in Central Ohio – and added a CEO-style managing partner in 1988 before many of its peers.

“You don’t get to be around that long if you don’t take succession seriously,” Trafford said.

Tannous said he will continue the path set by Trafford, with a special attention to developing young lawyers. The COO position he vacates will initially remain empty. He said he’ll give younger lawyers an opportunity to step into leadership roles at Porter Wright.

“It’ll be more assignment-based tasks and who rises to that level,” he said. “It’s an opportunity to see if we can develop the next generation of leaders.”

Porter Wright is the region’s second-largest firm with 138 lawyers in Columbus. It employs 75 additional attorneys at other offices in the state, Washington D.C. and Florida.

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