

**NAME:** Mark G. Lawson  
Board-Certified in City, County and  
Local Government Law



**EDUCATION:** Indiana University (B.S. School of Public and  
Environmental Affairs, 1977), Bloomington,  
Indiana.

Stetson University, College of Law (Juris Doctor *with honors*, 1988), St.  
Petersburg, Florida, 1985 – 1988.

**PROFESSION:** Attorney at Law. Mark G. Lawson, P. A.

Bryant Miller Olive, P.A.  
Tallahassee, Florida, 1999 to 2013; Chair of State and Local  
Government Practice, (former) Member of Compensation  
Committee, Member of Board of Directors.

Nabors, Giblin & Nickerson, P.A.  
Tallahassee, Florida, 1991-1999; Head of Public Utilities Practice.

General Counsel for Collier County Water-Sewer  
District and Collier County Utilities Division as Assistant Collier  
County Attorney, Naples, Florida, 1988-1991.

Executive Vice President, Midwest Title Guarantee  
Company of Florida, Naples, Florida, 1979 - 1987.

Admitted to The Florida Bar in 1988.

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATION:**

Mr. Lawson's practice focuses on matters of public finance and the development of special revenue programs to deliver essential services and capital infrastructure. He has significant experience in structuring the acquisition of water and sewer utilities for local government, complex community redevelopment initiatives, non-ad valorem assessments and numerous public/private partnerships. Mr. Lawson has an excellent working knowledge of governance alternatives and revenue sources available to local governments.

## **FIRE PROTECTION ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE:**

Mr. Lawson presents rich subject matter involvement, experience, and innovation in the use, implementation and judicial review of special assessment law in Florida. Over 20 years ago he refined the use of factual and legally relevant determinations in assessment implementation resolutions, as a means to prohibit jurists from substituting their judgment for that of a local governing body. This approach is now widely used statewide in local government legal circles.

His assessment experience involves numerous favorable judicial determinations involving citizen challenge to his assessment work while practicing as a shareholder with the Nabors, Giblin & Nickerson firm, including *Harris v. Wilson*, 693 So.2d 945 (Fla. 1992), *Sarasota County v. Sarasota Church of Christ*, 667 So.2d 180 (Fla. 1995), *Lake County v. Water Oak Mgmt. Corp.*, 695 So.2d 667 (Fla. 1997), *City of Winter Springs v. State*, 776 So.2d 255 (Fla. 2001), *City of North Lauderdale v. SMM Properties, Inc.* 825 So.2d 343 (Fla. 2002). While with the Nabors firm he was involved as the responsible attorney in developing fire protection assessments in: Dania, Davie, Desoto County, Hollywood, Lake County, Margate, Miami, Miramar, North Lauderdale, Pembroke Pines, Polk County, Pompano Beach, Sarasota County, Sunrise, Tallahassee, and Tamarac, to name several.

Upon moving to Bryant Miller Olive, Mr. Lawson was a chair of the state and local government practice for over 13 years. There, instead of waiting for challenges, he worked with clients to remove threats or uncertainty involving the use of revenue streams, including the careful and innovative use of special assessments, tax increment, capital extension fees, and transfer of title fees, which might involve political or legal controversy. By doing so, he was able to lower risk and potential political and legal costs for clients before the governmental clients relied on such revenues. Such strategic approach allows local governments to avoid the threat of refund and policy fallout concerns, thus giving more confidence to local decision-makers that their funding and budgeting decisions will not be legally threatened or overturned.

Mr. Lawson played a significant role in developing legal strategy in *Christopher J. Schrader v. Florida Keys Aqdt. Auth.*, 840 So.2d 1050 (Fla. 2003), *Citizens Advocating Responsible Envtl. Solutions, Inc. v. City of Marco Island*, 959 So.2d 203 (Fla. 2003), *Dr. Gregory L. Strand v. Escambia County*, 992 So.2d 150 (Fla. 2008), and *Miccosukee Tribe v. S. Fla. Water Mgmt. Dist.*, 48 So.3d 811 (Fla. 2010), where chapter 75, Florida statutes, was used as a means to successfully resolve a myriad of contested legal issues in advance of reliance upon various revenue streams by government officials. Notably he was lead counsel in *Panama City Beach Cmty. Redevelopment Agency v. State*, 831 So.2d 662 (Fla. 2002), *Bay County v. Town of Cedar Grove*, 992 So.2d 164 (Fla. 2008), and *City of Parker v. State*, 992 So.2d 171 (Fla. 2008), and numerous other successful circuit court validations not appealed to the Florida Supreme Court – all of which thoughtfully and successfully used judicial validation to address potential local controversy in advance and confirmed the future use of revenue streams and associated legal matters with finality which were crucial to long term local funding of capital facilities and essential services budgeting and planning strategies.

Throughout most the 1990s he was a leader in the Nabors firm in developing and documenting a demand-based approach to fire rescue assessments, and that firm's initial advancement of its service and consulting affiliate – Government Services Group. After joining Bryant Miller Olive in 1999, he was approached by local governments and local government trade organization representatives seeking a more simplified, but legally sufficient approach to funding fire protection, without including advanced life-support emergency medical services as dictated by the Florida Supreme Court.

For the last several years he has collaborated with several consulting concerns, most notably Owen M. Beitsch, PhD of Real Estate Research Consultants, and public data experts to focus on unique service availability concepts for funding fire protection by local governments in Florida. He was the lead attorney in all aspects of project work and successful judicial validation for all of his former firm's fire assessment programs, including the cities of Brooksville, St. Petersburg, and Springfield. Each was approved by the Circuit Court without appeal, and is final.

Mr. Lawson continues to represent Haines City and the Springfield, For example, see <http://hainescity.com/fireassessment/> and <http://springfield.fl.gov/shared/announcements/Fire%20Protection%20Service%20Assessment.htm>

Mr. Lawson's approach carefully combines the use of superior non-legal expertise as an expense in an expedited litigation paradigm, which protects local government treasuries, and insulates local government officials from political challenge and the financial risk of an unsuccessful program. The approach uniquely is partially contingent upon success once a careful executive summary explanation is provided and highly accurate proposed rates and funding targets are shared with decision makers in a public setting. The body of work is open and transparent to affected property owners, swift, and can be begun, implemented and judicially validated (including the appeal period required by law) at any time throughout the year - typically all within a 90 to 120 day time frame.

#### PROFESSIONAL, CIVIC AND SOCIAL AFFILIATIONS:

Member, The Florida Bar; Member, United States District Court for Middle District of Florida; Recognized as a Certified Land Title Searcher (C.L.S.) and Certified Land Title Closer (C.L.S.) by the Fla. Land Title Assn.; Former member of the Coastal Area Planning Comm. and Collier County Planning Agency; previously and currently rated as a Super Lawyer by peers; Member, Faith Presbyterian Church, Tallahassee; Life Member Indiana University Alumni Assoc.; Husband, Father; USGA handicap index current.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

Mark G. Lawson  
MARK G. LAWSON, P. A.  
Tallahassee, Florida  
Telephone: 850-591-5630  
Facsimile: 850-807-2987  
Email: [mlawson@MarkGLawson.com](mailto:mlawson@MarkGLawson.com)

#### REFERENCES:

References gladly provided upon request.