

# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

*33rd Annual Conference*

# 2026



**MICHAEL BERSANI**  
*Partner*  
*Hervas, Condon, and Bersani, P.C.*

Mike Bersani graduated from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 1985 and John Marshall Law School in 1988. He served as a judicial law clerk to Florida Appellate Court Judge Edward T. Barfield. He is a past chair of the ISBA's Local Government Section Council and DuPage County Bar Association's Local Government Committee. Mike is a partner with Hervas, Condon and Bersani, P.C. and maintains a litigation practice in federal civil rights and state tort litigation in defense of local governments and officials. Mike is rated AV® Preeminent in Martindale.com. He also serves as an elected Trustee for the Bartlett Fire Protection District.



**MARIAH DIGRINO**  
*Partner*  
*DLA Piper*

Mariah DiGrino concentrates her practice in the areas of land use and zoning, public-private financing, public incentives, historic preservation, and community and economic development, as well as general real estate.

Mariah's practice involves representation of owners, developers, retailers, investors and public-private partnerships on both the local and national levels. She has experience securing annexation, development, zoning and subdivision approvals, negotiating and implementing public-private development and financing arrangements and public incentives, negotiating historic preservation designations and incentives, performing general and zoning due diligence and property evaluation and negotiating and closing real estate acquisitions and dispositions.



**TONY FIORETTI**  
*Assistant Village Attorney*  
*Village of Oak Park*

Tony Fioretti is an Assistant Village Attorney for the Village of Oak Park, Illinois. He represents the Village in litigation and serves as counsel to Village staff, management, and the Board of Trustees. His career has focused on the defense of local government in litigation in Federal and State courts in Illinois both as in-house counsel and in private practice.



**HAROLD "HAL" FRANCKE**  
*Partner*  
*Meltzer Purtill and Stelle LLC*

Hal concentrates his practice in annexation, zoning, development, and development/redevelopment incentive matters as well as utility system and roadway infrastructure construction financing matters.

Hal has had primary responsibility for land use and development matters for parcels throughout the Chicagoland collar counties for more than 40 years. His representation has encompassed all forms of land use, including retail, single-family and multi-family residential, senior housing, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses, such as schools and places of religious worship.

Hal has also participated extensively in the drafting of state and local legislation of significance. These include amendments to the Illinois Business District Development and Redevelopment Law, the Illinois Road Improvement Impact Fee Law, the Illinois Vacant Lot Act, the Illinois Public Construction Bond Act, and the Illinois Township Open Space Act.

Prior to joining MPS in 2013, Hal was a partner at an Am Law 100 global law firm and its predecessor firms. He was named Chicago's "Land Use and Zoning Law Lawyer of the Year" by Best Lawyers® in both 2013 and 2019.



**VASUDHA  
GADHIRAJU**

*Director of Innovation  
and Technology  
Town of Normal*

Vasudha Gadhiraaju has served as Director of Innovation and Technology for the Town of Normal since 2019, providing vision and leadership for the Town's smart city and innovation initiatives while overseeing daily operations of the technology department.

Prior to joining the Town, Gadhiraaju was Executive Director of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission, where she led several award-winning long-range planning efforts for Bloomington, Normal, and McLean County. Earlier in her career, she served the City of Decatur in roles spanning community and economic development, neighborhood planning, and geographic information systems.

Gadhiraaju holds a bachelor's degree in architecture from Andhra University in India and a master's degree in community and regional planning from Iowa State University, with minors in transportation planning and GIS. She is an active member of Government Management Information Sciences and serves on its Accreditation Committee, and is a member of the American Planning Association and the American Institute of Certified Planners.

She currently serves on the governing boards of Parklands Foundation, For A Better Tomorrow, and the McLean County Museum of History.



**BENJAMIN  
GEHRT**

*Partner  
Clark, Baird, Smith*

Ben Gehrt focuses his practice on traditional labor law and employment litigation. He brings extensive experience in grievance and interest arbitration, contract negotiations, unfair labor practice charges, and EEO and wage-hour litigation. Before becoming an attorney, Ben served as a Plant Manager for a food manufacturing company in suburban Chicago. That background gives him a practical, management-side perspective and a strong ability to relate to the real-world challenges clients face.

Ben represents both public and private sector clients, helping them achieve meaningful cost savings through changes in staffing, wage structures, retiree benefits, sick leave buybacks, and work rules. He is also an accomplished litigator, having handled cases in state and federal trial courts and successfully represented clients in appellate courts. His matters include discrimination claims, constitutional employment disputes, wage-hour cases, and employee benefits litigation under ERISA and Illinois law.

At Clark Baird Smith LLP, Ben has developed a niche practice advising clients on complex wage and hour issues unique to both the private and public sectors. He is a frequent author on labor and employment law topics and was named an Illinois Rising Star in 2016.



**JASON  
GUIISINGER**

*Partner  
Klein, Thorpe, and  
Jenkins, Ltd.*

Jason Guisinger is a partner at Klein, Thorpe & Jenkins. He focuses his practice in the areas of municipal law, school law, election law, land use and zoning and public sector labor and employment law and spends a significant amount of time representing public entities, police officers, firefighters and public officials in litigation at all levels of State and Federal courts.

Jason is also a regular speaker and author on issues of legal concern to units of local government in Illinois.

Jason received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana in 2002 and his Juris Doctor degree from the Michigan State University College of Law in 2005. Jason is admitted to practice in the state of Illinois, the Northern District of Illinois and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.



**DAVID MATHUES**  
*Partner*  
**Hervas, Condon, and Bersani, P.C.**

David Mathues graduated from the University of Notre Dame Law School summa cum laude in 2007. His practice is devoted to defending local governments in tort, employment, and federal civil rights cases at every stage of litigation. He previously worked as an Assistant State's Attorney for Cook County, as a Litigation Associate for Kirkland & Ellis LLP, and as law clerk for Hon. Danny J. Boggs, Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit. David is a partner with Hervas, Condon & Bersani, P.C.



**KATRIINA MCCUIRE**  
*Partner*  
**Thompson Coburn LLP**

Katriina McGuire helps clients navigate complex land use and zoning matters throughout the City of Chicago and surrounding suburbs, clearing the path for successful development. She is Managing Partner of the firm's Chicago office and serves as Assistant General Counsel. A proactive and highly engaged business partner, Katriina works closely with clients to build effective development strategies and anticipate obstacles in the approval process.

She combines deep knowledge of evolving regulatory frameworks with strong relationships across zoning and economic development departments in the Chicago region. This dual focus on process and people allows her to guide clients through complex regulatory, community, and political landscapes toward municipal approvals.

Katriina is particularly sought out for land use entitlements in Chicago and nearby suburbs, representing clients before plan commissions, zoning boards, and municipal bodies. Her clients span industries including real estate, banking, telecommunications, renewable energy, hospitality, health care, and entertainment. She also provides zoning due diligence nationwide and advises cannabis-related businesses on land use approvals across Illinois.



**HART PASSMAN**  
*Partner*  
**Elrod Friedman LLP**

Hart Passman is a land use and local government attorney representing both municipalities and private sector clients. He serves as Village Attorney for Arlington Heights, Libertyville, and Prairie Grove, and assists with representation of Highland Park, Lincolnwood, and other Illinois municipalities. His municipal practice spans the full range of local government matters, including public-private partnerships, tax increment financing districts, special service areas, and the drafting and negotiation of zoning approvals, annexation agreements, and development agreements.

Hart also counsels municipalities on code enforcement, licensing, Open Meetings Act and FOIA compliance, and regulatory matters. For private clients, he secures land use and zoning approvals for projects such as shopping centers, medical facilities, hotels, mixed-use developments, and office buildings, with particular expertise in public-private partnership agreements. Hart is active in the Illinois Local Government Lawyers Association and previously chaired the Home Rule Attorneys Committee of the Illinois Municipal League. Chambers USA 2025 recognized him among Illinois' leading Zoning and Land Use attorneys.

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**MELISSA SMART**  
*Director of Education*  
**Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission**

Melissa A. Smart is Director of Education at the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission of the Supreme Court of Illinois, where she develops and presents programs to educate lawyers on professional responsibility and supervises a team dedicated to helping attorneys serve clients ethically and effectively. During more than twenty-five years with the Commission, she has investigated thousands of misconduct complaints, handled more than 100 formal disciplinary proceedings, and tried dozens of matters before the Hearing Board.

Ms. Smart earned her B.A. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and her J.D., cum laude, from The John Marshall Law School. She holds leadership roles in numerous bar and regulatory organizations, including the Chicago Bar Association, Illinois State Bar Association, American Bar Association, National Organization of Bar Counsel, and the International Conference of Legal Regulators, where she is a frequent presenter.

A nationally and internationally recognized speaker, she presents on ethics, professionalism, civility, and lawyer well-being. At the request of the Illinois Supreme Court, she served on the committee that shaped the current Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct. She is also an Adjunct Professor at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, teaching Professional Responsibility.