

summaries



the official newsletter of sigma investment counselors

May 2019

UNDER CONSTRUCTION!

Typically, when we see an “Under Construction” sign, we moan and groan. It means delays, mess and inconvenience. This has not been the case at Sigma. Our “Under Construction” has largely been met with enthusiastic reviews from both our team members and our clients.

What do we mean? We have moved our main office from Southfield to Northville. We have promoted team members. We have had beloved team members retire. We have welcomed new staff. We have added new roles. We have upgraded and improved our systems infrastructure, among other things. This type of “construction” will continue into the future so that we can meet not only our high standards but that of our clients’ as well.

Our move from a cold and sterile high rise building in Southfield to a small office building in the heart of downtown Northville has given us a local presence in a quaint community. We have been welcomed by the Downtown Development Authority and the Chamber of Commerce. The local merchants and restaurateurs have been helpful and kind. The summer concerts, art fairs, festivals and farmer’s market that take place right outside of our office windows add to the hometown experience. Friday evening concerts in the town square, Parmenter’s Cider Mill, Mill Race Historical Village, Mayberry State Park and other areas of interest in and around the town make this little community an exciting place to explore. Many of our clients have already visited

or have expressed an interest in coming to visit so that they too can experience what Northville has to offer.

New team members, Melissa and Diana, are in the process of not only “learning the ropes”, but mastering them as well. Both have replaced our now retired and beloved portfolio administrators, Barb and Nancy, who each had over 20 years of experience working with our clients. There wasn’t a problem that the two of them could not solve and we are thankful that they chose to remain at Sigma throughout their careers. With our new “crew” solidly in place, clients can rest assure that the “Sigma” experience that they have come to know and appreciate will continue into the future.

The creation of the paraplanner role at Sigma has brought with it an added dimension to our organizational structure. Our paraplanners are quite knowledgeable and have enhanced our processes. They are fluent in the financial planning field, which includes insurance, employee benefits, investments, tax, estate and retirement services. Their skill sets mesh nicely with that of our investment advisors. Many of our clients have not only met the paraplanner that has been assigned to them, they have directly corresponded and worked with them as well.

Our CEO, Bob Bilkie, in close concert with our colleague, Chris Frayne, have always been at the forefront of innovation and therefore our systems have been updated

local independent personal accessible
interactive creative local independent personal
knowledgeable thoughtful ethical experienced

and upgraded many times over the years. We have gone from typing each and every quarterly letter on a manual typewriter, which took weeks on end, to typing them on a computer keyboard and mass producing them in minutes. We have gone from calling the broker dealer for each and every client trade, which took many hours each and every day, to entering the trades into our systems, uploading them to the custodian and having the process completed within minutes. We have gone from creating excel spreadsheets to show our clients' the lifespan of activity that has already taken place and activity that may possibly take place in the future, to having a robust system that allows the data to be sliced, diced and manipulated into various scenarios, allowing the client a view into their future based upon actions taken.

Our client portal allows advisors and clients alike, to place and retrieve important documents on the site safely and securely. The two factor authorization system prevents untoward individuals from getting into the portal and stealing client information. The postal service has had numerous complaints about missing mail. Does it end up in the dead letter box at the post office or has someone stole what appears to be an account statement to be used for inappropriate purposes? The client portal is an easy yet secure way to exchange information between the client and the

advisor and is another bullet in our cybersecurity arsenal.

There has also been a considerable change in processes over the years due to the evolving regulatory environment. Thanks to the likes of Bernard Madoff, the Securities and Exchange Commission has had to impose new rules and regulations on advisors in order to protect investor assets from swindlers. Although Sigma prides itself on superb customer service, it does become increasingly difficult to do so within the confines of these regulations, as our clients are well aware. Transferring assets from one account to another is no longer just a phone call away. Paperwork needs to be signed and sent to and verified by the custodian, before any money movement takes place. Although cumbersome, it is truly in the clients' best interest to take the required additional steps so that their assets are not misappropriated.

In sum, our ultimate goal is to continue to build and improve upon the processes that we have in place so that our valued clients have a wonderful experience. We are thankful for our clients that have not only tolerated our construction, but have also provided useful inputs, hence becoming part of our construction crew as well.

Shari A. Bilkie, IACCP®
President & Chief Compliance Officer

The views in this publication are as of May 2019 and are for informational purposes only and do not represent any recommendation of any particular security or strategy and should not be considered investment advice.

Please remember to contact Sigma Investment Counselors if there are any changes in your financial situation or investment objectives