

FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY ASSOCIATION

Event Summary: Insights from Former Government Officials (Part 1)

June 19, 2018 – Holland & Knight, Washington, D.C.

The Federal Real Property Association (FRPA) held Part 1 of its summer series on June 19, 2018 at the Holland & Knight office in Washington, D.C. The event featured a panel of former government officials who provided their insights and lessons learned from both their public and private sector experience. Speakers included Norm Dong (Managing Director at FD Stonewater and former PBS Commissioner) and Dave Mader (Chief Strategy Officer at Deloitte and former OMB Controller). Keith Cunningham (Assistant Director of Infrastructure at GAO) also joined the panel to provide his public-sector perspective. The discussion was moderated by Stuart Burns (Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Portfolio Management and Customer Engagement at GSA). Highlights are below:



Clockwise from top-left: Stuart Burns, Keith Cunningham, Norm Dong, Dave Mader

Freeze/Reduce the Footprint

The panelists noted that agencies now seem to understand the purpose of the Freeze the Footprint and Reduce the Footprint initiatives. Originally, there was limited explanation of the intent or ultimate strategy of the initiatives. Agencies were following the policy; however, some decisions to reduce square footage were not made in the best interest of the government.

Perspective on Federal Real Estate after Moving to the Private Sector

Dave Mader noted that his perspective has not significantly changed since joining the private sector. Federal real estate should be a priority of senior leadership. Agencies need to keep the spotlight shining on the real estate portfolio so it receives the necessary attention and funding. Norm Dong noted that his perspective has changed in some ways. He noted that it is important to think about the underlying value of the Federal real estate portfolio, not just whether an asset is utilized/underutilized.

Telework

Keith Cunningham noted that GAO issued a [report](#) in March 2018 about telework. Telework was started in the Federal government as a perk and then agencies realized it could be used to reduce costs. GSA may be able to play a role in establishing telework guidelines across the government as those guidelines do not currently exist.

Changing Budgetary Environment

Stuart Burns noted that sequestration aided in reducing the Federal footprint. However, increased budgets may have the opposite effect. Norm Dong added that regardless of budget, the judicious management of Federal real estate is here to stay.

GAO High Risk List

Keith Cunningham noted that there are still concerns around excess and underutilized property, reliance on leasing, insufficient security, and data reliability. However, there has been consistent progress in these areas over the last 15 years. There was even discussion last year of removing Federal real property from the High Risk List.

SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT

Mr. Stuart Burns became the Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Portfolio Management and Customer Engagement (PT) for the United States Public Buildings Service (PBS) in July 2015. As Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Burns is responsible for managing a real estate portfolio of 371 million square feet, which includes 8,700 owned or leased assets and 564 historic properties.

Keith B. Cunningham is an Assistant Director of physical infrastructure issues at the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), the investigative and audit arm of the U.S. Congress. Mr. Cunningham has developed a broad expertise in real property policy and management issues during his 20 years at GAO—having led the work for more than 35 GAO reports and testimony statements.

Norman Dong is a Managing Director at FD Stonewater, a real estate brokerage, investment, development, and asset management firm focusing on Federal, state, and commercial properties. As the Former GSA PBS Commissioner, Mr. Dong managed the nationwide asset management, design, construction, leasing, building management and disposal of approximately 374 million square feet of government-owned and leased space.

David Mader is currently the Chief Strategy Officer for the Civilian Sector of Deloitte Federal Consulting. He is the former Controller at OMB. He was nominated by President Obama on May 13, 2014 and confirmed by the United States Senate on July 17, 2014. He was designated by the President as Acting Deputy Director for Management for the period June 2015 through November 2015.