

June 28, 2012

Metropolitan Bank deal closes

A deal to sell the Fasseas family's ailing Metropolitan Bank Group—among the area's biggest locally headquartered lenders—to investors led by Chicago banker Roberto Herencia has closed.

The group, called BXM Holdings Inc., has invested \$206.7 million into the bank, which had been run for 35 years by Chicago's Fasseas family, the force behind the PAWS animal charity in Chicago. The new capital will help retire some of Metropolitan's obligations under the federal bank bailout program, under which it received about \$80 million, and will make Metropolitan "well capitalized."

The \$2.4 billion-asset bank group consists of Oswego Community Bank, Plaza Bank, Archer Bank, Metrobank and North Community Bank. Together, they have more than 90 branches in the Chicago area.

Metropolitan Bank Group likely would have failed were it not for the investor group coming in. Many banks in Chicago and nationwide have collapsed and been seized by regulators because the owners were reluctant to sell.

Herencia is the former chief executive of Banco Popular's North American operations. His investor

group includes Antonio del Valle Ruiz, whom Bloomberg has called "hidden billionaire" worth \$3.2 billion, and Juan Francisco Beckmann Vidal, the controlling shareholder of Jose Cuervo. Also slated to serve on the board of directors is Edward Magnus, who worked at Chicago-based private equity firm Madison Dearborn until recently helping to launch BlueSpruce Investments.

By deposit market share, Metropolitan Bank Group is the seventh-biggest locally headquartered bank.

"When you look around our city, many local business household names are in existence because of the important work done by the Metropolitan Bank Group, taking a chance on local entrepreneurs because we believed in them," Peter and Paula Fasseas said in an e-mail to workers on Friday morning. "The fabric of the past 35 years of our lives is interwoven with this company.

"We know that we are leaving it in experienced hands, and look forward to seeing many successes in the future," the couple said.

Their daughter, Alexis, said Friday morning that she and her mother, Paula, were heading to Oklahoma City to rescue animals made



Banco Popular North America President, Roberto Herencia, Tuesday, April 25, 2006 in Rosemont. (Stacie Freudenberg)

homeless by the recent tornadoes and now stuck at overcrowded shelters. The new investors will own 99 percent of Metropolitan's stock.

"Our investors are pleased to have this opportunity to invest in a community banking franchise with such deep roots" in the Chicago area and such a strong base of deposits, said Herencia, who will be chairman of the bank. Metropolitan is now positioned to "address its credit quality issues and entertain loan-growth opportunities."

By Becky Yerak
Tribune reporter