

## Board OKs city waterfront hotel plan

By John Mason Columbia-Greene Media | Posted: Thursday, March 17, 2016 12:45 am

HUDSON — Redburn Development’s plan to turn 41 Cross St. into a boutique 55-room hotel was granted a use variance in a four-to-one vote by the Zoning Board of Appeals Wednesday.

The decision means the hotel can be located in a zone, RSC, where it is not named as a permitted use, and the zoning change the Common Council moved forward Tuesday night won’t be necessary for this project.

Now the hotel just has one more stop — to the Planning Board for site plan approval next month.

In a public hearing prior to the ZBA meeting, John Blackburn of Redburn said the hotel would keep the historic characteristics of the 150-year-old building. It will have no huge branding signs, he said.

The smallest rooms will be 350 square feet.

“A full-time salesperson will look to bring folks to Hudson,” he said. “We’re selling Hudson with this hotel. We’ll have limited services — no restaurant, no events.” They hope to attract corporate retreats, charging \$149 to \$159 for the average room rate, “affordable by corporate folks,” he said.

They plan a rooftop, enclosed-glass patio.

Amanda Henry, who lives on Cross Street, said she was delighted with the applicants who want to make something of the town, with a “conscious and responsible approach to development.”

Mike Tucker, interim director of the Columbia Economic Development Corp., praised Rossi and Blackburn as “two young gentlemen” who developed their own startup as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute students, were able to sell it off while still under 30 and invest \$10 million in housing in Troy and Watervliet, and demonstrated their commitment to this region by sticking around.

“It’s a great opportunity to work with them and get them interested in other properties on Warren Street and other areas,” he said. The hotel, he said, would contribute to tourism and “create a critical mass to enable other businesses to create opportunities.”



### Waterfront addition

The building at 41 Cross St., which has been the home to Stageworks and before that to Kaz, was granted a use variance Wednesday by the Hudson Zoning Board to become a 55-room hotel.

Nicole Vidor of Allen Street raised three concerns, lighting, idling tour buses and traffic.

Rossi said they would be dimming the lights after certain hours; they would look into other parking facilities for tour buses; and would try to find ways to control traffic with signage and education.

But ZBA Chairwoman Lisa Kenneally said these questions were not appropriate for the ZBA and should be directed to the Planning Board.

Adam Weiner of Allen Street said the management company, Prestige, “has had a lot of negative reviews.” Kenneally said this was also a Planning Board question.

Also speaking in favor of the project were Hudson Development Corporation Executive Director Sheena Salvino and Alderman Rick Rector, D-1st Ward.

Following this public hearing and four others, the board went into a closed-door session. This was not an executive session, Board Attorney Mitchell Khosrova said, but an attorney-client meeting.

According to the New York State guide to Conducting Public Meetings and Public Hearings, “a public body may meet with its attorney, for the purpose of soliciting and receiving legal advice, without the need to comply with the Open Meetings Law.”

When the public meeting officially convened, board member Stephen Dunn argued that the use variance should be declined because the hardship was self-created: The applicant acquired the property knowing that hotels were not permitted uses. He said he favored the hotel itself, but said, “I don’t think we have the power to grant this.”

He also said parking would be a problem.

Khosrova said the application for the variance also includes the current owner, Stageworks executive director Laura Margolis. Margolis provided the reasons that the evolution of her theater required her to sell the building.

Redburn attorney Kristal Heinz said that if parking rules were adhered to by the city’s boards, “we wouldn’t have a restaurant on Warren Street,” and the library wouldn’t have been able to go into the Armory; but her clients are willing to find 55 dedicated spaces.

And she said the current use for the building, as a theater, is obsolete.

Alderman John Friedman, D-3rd Ward, said the city itself had created the hardship by rezoning the city but forgetting to include hotels, a use specified in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

The board gave the project a passing grade under the State Environmental Quality Review Act.

The board then voted on the project's use variance. Dunn said he was against it because of the self-created hardship. "The remedy is for the city to adopt the (amended) zoning," he said.

Member Myron Polenberg said he was voting yes because the community supports the project, and "it enriches the community."

"This is one of the most complete applications I've seen in 12 years on the board," said member Theresa Joyner in voting yes. "They did what we asked."

Kenneally and member Kathy Harter joined the yes votes and the variance was approved. Member Russell Gibson, co-owner of the Barlow Hotel, abstained.