

**MINUTES FROM THE CITY OF WATERVLIET ZONING BOARD MEETING HELD ON JUNE 11, 2014 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE WATERVLIET SENIOR CITIZEN CENTER, 1501 BROADWAY, WATERVLIET, NEW YORK**

MEMBERS PRESENT:           Dot Dugan                   Jeff Czarnecki                   Frank Gilchrist  
                                  Joe Kokernak               Mark Cady

Chairman Cady called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. He asked the recording secretary to take attendance and to read the agenda.

**APPLICATION OF REDBURN DEVELOPMENT, UNDER CONTRACT TO PURCHASE THE FORMER TILLEY LADDER INDUSTRIAL SITE, SEEKING ZONING APPROVAL TO OCCUPY THE PROPERTY WITH A PLANNED MIX USE DISTRICT (PMUD). PLANS CALL FOR SIXTY-TWO (62) RESIDENTIAL APARTMENTS WITH A PUBLIC UTILITY (SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM) LOCATED ON THE ROOF. THE PUBLIC UTILITY REQUIRES A SPECIAL PERMIT BE OBTAINED AND SEVERAL AREA VARIANCES ARE REQUIRED FOR THE RESIDENTIAL PORTION OF THE PROJECT.**

John Blackburn of Redburn Development started out by giving the Board some background information on himself and his partner, Tom Rossi. They are both RPI graduates who founded BullEx, a fire safety and training systems company. BullEx was sold in 2012, and they went into the real estate development business. They purchased property at 172-176 River Street in Troy and developed it with 21 high end apartments and 3 storefronts. This building is 125 years old and much of the historic character was restored. They intend to own these properties for the long term. Since their plan is to hold onto these properties, their philosophy is to do them the right way and energy sustainability is a top priority. Property is equipped with security cameras.

Next, Tom Rossi of Redburn Development spoke about the River Street property. He noted their energy efficiency commitment for this project, the restoration of the hardwood floors, high end kitchen cabinets, granite and appliances. As far as the Tilley Ladder project, they are looking to do 62 high end apartments – 33 one bedrooms, 15 one bedroom plus study and 14 two bedrooms. All units will be at least 700 sf and the rents will range between \$800-\$1200. There are a couple two story lofts. Also looking to differentiate by adding different amenities – tenant storage in basement, fitness room, pet friendly pet washing room in basement, roof deck. Big on surveillance – card access – that sort of stuff. Plan to hire professional property management company. Building is 63,000 square feet plus the basement and 1.46 acres and the proposal is to have 74 parking spaces. Looking for upscale young professionals or couples. This is not a low income housing project and that is not what they are interested in doing.

Next, project architect, Dan Sanders spoke. Company has been focusing on adaptive reuse of buildings highlighted by historic restoration projects. Warehouse style has become very popular for adaptive reuse and historic elements of these building are enjoyable to work with. It was stated 75% of the windows are boarded up or broken. In the proposed renovation, all windows are being opened up and windows will be added. Plan to work within the parameters of the building itself. Average apartment will be 900 sf.

Dave Ingalls, project engineer, spoke about the site plan. He explained the site is 1.46 acres, it's in a planned mixed use district, there is a minimum requirement of 20% residential – they are proposing 80% reuse of the building for residential apartments and likewise they are meeting 20% commercial requirement for the mixed use which would be the solar energy on the rooftop. Unit density is slightly above the 30 units per acre – they are at 22.5 units per acre totaling at 62 proposed units. Parking calculations, the code requires 1.5 parking spaces per unit – we are meeting that requirement through 74 spaces plus a bicycle racks and some credits for off street parking. Focus with zoning board tonight is the variances proposed and the special use permit.

Frank Gilchrist asked if they plan to own the building long term. Mr. Blackburn explained they sold their manufacturing business a couple years ago and their plan is to continue doing real estate development and owning real estate projects for the long term.

Frank Gilchrist asked who would mow the lawn. Tom Rossi said they use Sunrise Property Management.

Frank Gilchrist asked if they would remove the snow also. Tom Rossi said they will hire someone to do it. John Blackburn reiterated the property management firm they use manages thousands of units in the Capital District – they are a professional management company.

Joe Kokernak asked if when snow is removed if it would be just pushed somewhere or put in a dump truck and hauled away to which they did not know the answer at this time.

Frank Gilchrist asked if a property manager would be on site – someone living there to manage or a tenant. John Blackburn thought that initially there would be someone on site. Tony Rossi stated that they also had a staff of two people right now.

Frank Gilchrist asked how the garbage would be handled. There is a dumpster location on site; so it will be onsite collection through a private contractor. The garbage collection will be assessed and additional pickups will be scheduled if garbage becomes a problem.

Frank Gilchrist asked what the lower roof was going to be. There are a number of roofs. A couple will be leased to solar energy contractor and the second story roof will be a rooftop deck for residents to use and they are investigating adding green space. Mark Gilchrist requested rooftop plans for the next meeting. Dot Dugan asked what is put on the rooftop deck for safety and if it is lighted at night and if there are specific hours it can be used. The plan is to put fencing up and low lighting is a possibility.

Frank Gilchrist asked where the main entrance was. It is off the main parking lot on 1<sup>st</sup> Street and key card access on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

There are no plans for studio apartments – the majority will be one bedroom. Each tenant will have a storage bin in the basement. The fitness center will be equipped with treadmills, weights, etc. There will not be a maintenance fee; and rents will range from \$800-\$1200.

Dave Dressel is meeting with the group in the next week regarding the sanitary and storm sewer and plan to do some additional survey work. Developers are fully prepared to make the adjustments on the sewer lines.

Mark Cady brought up snow removal and where the snow will go. Plans are to push snow to green space when feasible but for larger storms or a winter like last winter, the snow will have to be removed from the property.

Dot Dugan asked how tenants are screened. Their screening process includes full background check, income must be 2 ½ times one month's rent, two references and strict building site rules must be adhered to; and they will not stray from this screening criteria.

The old fence will come down and a new elevator will be put in. Parking lot will be macadam.

Before the Public Comment period began, Mark Gilchrist explained that the applicant was here seeking two area variances and a special permit for the solar on top of the building. One of the area variances is because

on the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue side the building is built right on the property line and it doesn't allow you to do that. The other reason and the most important reason, is that they want to put in 62 units and they are allowed to put in 42 ½. The code allows them to do what they want to do if they were only going to put in 42 ½ units. They could do that today and they would not be here in front of the board asking for special permission for a variance to put in 62 units; and that's the big item on the Board's agenda. He mentioned the Board would be meeting again on July 9<sup>th</sup> and that the Planning Board would be meeting June 25<sup>th</sup> to deal with the site itself – the parking, the green space, trees, water runoff, water and sewer issues, stormwater issues and they will more than likely meet again the fourth Wednesday of July.

#### Public Comments

Tom Rocco – 127 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Watervliet, New York. He is concerned about parking and asked if the green space could be moved to the roof which would free up additional parking on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. He also asked what a “parking credit” is. Mark Gilchrist explained a parking credit is when a big development like this does not have enough off street parking, the City has developed into its code certain sections that allow you to reduce the amount of required parking if you put in bicycle racks, if you have perimeter parking on the outside of the development. There is some on-street parking on 1<sup>st</sup> Street, a tiny bit on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, on-street parking on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. So there is currently on street parking on the parameter of the building so there is a 10% reduction on the total requirement. Tom Rocco also asked if Watervliet would have special permit parking for residents. The answer was there is no permit parking in Watervliet. The Planning Board can consider the suggestion to move some of the necessary green space to the roof to free up the proposed green space area for parking.

The parking situation is still being evaluating and they will discuss it further with the Planning Board. There is a possibility to “bank” a parking area – where you designate a piece of the property to be turned into parking if it becomes necessary. Again for 62 units, the code is 1.5.

Michael Tully – 99 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Watervliet, New York. Mike Tully mentioned that 1.5 is really 2 cars and wanted to know where visitors would park. Parking is the biggest concern for visitors. It is hard to find a spot right now. Feels it is great to development the property but thinks 62 units are too many.

Steve Zablocky – 26 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Watervliet, New York. Worried about the additional traffic – stated many people already drive too fast and go through the stop signs in the area of 1<sup>st</sup> Street. Feels garbage overflow should be watched closely and that a manager should be employed on site. Also, worried about property value. Feels 62 is way too many units – 62 units could mean 100 people and most are two car families. Mr. Cady did mention that the problem with stop signs should be brought up to the police department.

Rachel Tallman Littlejohn – owner of 123 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Watervliet, New York but resides in downtown Albany. Both her mother and her mother-in-law live in the home. A lot of concerns about parking – agrees something should be done with building. Mentioned this is a working class neighborhood and feels there is no need for high end loft apartments. Concerned because her yard borders the building – the driveway and backyard is the corner. Privacy for moms and families – opposed to allowing more apartments than the variance allows for and grave concerns about traffic, the sewer, the salt. She feels the neighborhood does not need high end lofts.

Bob Lewis – 18 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Watervliet, New York. Stated parking will be a problem.

Jim Audi – 98 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Watervliet, New York. Asked why 62 units because he thinks most tenants will have two cars. Does not think it will drag the neighborhood down and thinks the clientele they are pursuing is probably good for the neighborhood and personally thinks it's positive but would rather see less units. Thinks

the special permit for solar is great. Thinks using the proposed green space area for more parking is a great alternative or maybe a portion of the area inside could be dedicated for parking.

Mike Teson – 123 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Watervliet, New York. Worried about fires on the solar roof and the fire department being able to get up there. All fire code regulations will be adhered to when installing the solar panel system.

Bob Butler – 206 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Watervliet, New York. Asked them who owns the solar company on the site. Where does the energy go? Mr. Blackburn stated the solar energy gets sold back into the building and to National Grid and he stated he and Mr. Rossi primarily own the solar company.

Anthony Littlejohn, owner of 123 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Watervliet, New York – resides in downtown Albany. Concerned with parking but main concern will be length of renovation. Length of construction is estimated at 11 months and does not foresee construction being too disruptive. Plan to be in contact with neighbors, making sure their concerns were addressed. He also mentioned concern about privacy for neighbors.

Joe Kokernak asked what how they plan to control dust when they cut window into the side of the building that doesn't have any windows. They assured him there would be some kind of dust control.

Linda Zablocky – 26 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Watervliet, New York – is there a noise variance when they are on the deck – will there be a time limit. Would this be a City concern or would I contact you, the owners. She was assured their tenants would be expected to follow the same Codes as others in the City and their number would be available to neighbors to voice any concerns. Also, concerned about people parking in front of her home, especially during a snowstorm. Her hope is that they take a lot of consideration into this concern. She thinks it is a great idea to do something with the building. Thinks 62 apartments is too many. Would like to keep it a nice quiet neighborhood.

Rachel Littlejohn spoke again regarding the dust when the windows are being put in. She was nervous about the health and safety of her family.

A motion was made by Mr. Cady and seconded by Ms. Dugan to refer the application to the Albany County Planning Board.

	YES	NO
Dot Dugan	Second	
Frank Gilchrist	X	
Joe Kokernak	X	
Jeff Czarnecki	X	
Mark Cady	Motion	

A motion was made by Mr. Cady and seconded by Ms. Dugan to table the application until the July 9, 2014 Zoning Board Meeting.

	YES	NO
Dot Dugan	Second	
Frank Gilchrist	X	
Joe Kokernak	X	
Jeff Czarnecki	X	

Mark Cady	Motion	
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The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.