

## Meet The Attorneys Behind \$100M Suit Over Chelsea Hotel

By **Emma Cueto**

*Law360 (May 12, 2021, 12:38 PM EDT)* -- Attorneys at Kasowitz Benson Torres LLP are spearheading a \$100 million lawsuit on behalf of the owners of the famous Chelsea Hotel in New York City, alleging a city agency wrongfully halted an important renovation and needlessly held up work for two years.

The case is part of a long-running battle over the fate of the historic hotel, which was built in the 1880s and was home to dozens of influential artists, actors and musicians during the 20th century such as Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, Jane Fonda and Jimi Hendricks.

However, Kasowitz clients Richard Born, Ira Drukier and Sean MacPherson — the influential hoteliers who purchased the property in 2016 — say the hotel has fallen from its former glory and is long-overdue for repairs and renovations, which they attempted to provide and claim a majority of tenants support.

In a complaint filed in New York federal court earlier this month, the hotel owners said the New York City Department of Buildings issued a stop-work order in 2018, six years into a redevelopment of the hotel, and that the DOB and New York City Department of Housing Preservation & Development then attempted to reclassify it as a single-room occupancy multiple dwelling.

However, the 58-page complaint said, the Chelsea Hotel had been issued a permanent exemption to the SROMD designation in the 1990s, and all construction had been permitted by two past consent decrees. The stop-work order was eventually rescinded in January of this year after the exemption was established in an underlying case.

Jennifer S. Recine, a partner at Kasowitz, told Law360 Pulse this case has New York all over it.

"To me, this is the best kind of work," she said. "It's a real New York case. It's about one of the city's most iconic properties, long-time tenants who are exceedingly colorful and interesting, and some of downtown's most respected developers, not to mention the way the city government functions ... It's been a quintessentially New York experience."

Recine is leading the four-attorney team behind the suit.

### **Jennifer S. Recine** **Kasowitz**

Recine is co-chair of the firm's real estate litigation practice and has experience with other types of high-stakes litigation including securities disputes. She started at Kasowitz in 2005 but left for a year in 2019 for Strook & Strook & Lavan LLP.



In her real estate practice, she has successfully defended Workspace, a mixed-use cooperative corporation that owns two buildings in New York City's SoHo; represented investors in the Savoy Hotel in Miami; and secured a \$1.25 million settlement on behalf of real estate investment developers in a dispute over five acres of Jersey Shore property.

Recine told Law360 Pulse that her work for the new owners of the Chelsea Hotel "fits squarely" into her practice, saying she views herself as a problem solver for her clients.

"I don't care about doing a particular kind of case; I care about being the right person to call when clients in the industry have a problem and being able to help them navigate their way through their problem," she said.

**Thomas Kelly  
Kasowitz**

Thomas Kelly, a partner in the New York office, handles a range of complex litigation, especially in the real estate, financial and tech spaces.

His real estate work has included representing The Related Companies, one of the main developers for the Hudson Yards project in Manhattan, as well as Sugar Hill Capital Partners in litigation connected to the purchase of a property in Park Slope in Brooklyn.

He was made a partner in the firm in 2017.



**Gary W. Dunn  
Kasowitz**

Gary W. Dunn is a special counsel at the firm whose practice focuses on complex civil and antitrust litigation.

He has represented the bankruptcy estate of Lehman Brothers Holdings in disputes arising out of the 2008 financial collapse and successfully pursued antitrust claims on behalf of Toyota Tsusho Corporation.



**Jill L. Forster  
Kasowitz**

Jill L. Forster is an associate who joined Kasowitz in 2019. She focuses on complex litigation, particularly in the finance industry.

Before joining Kasowitz, she was an associate at Brown Rudnick LLP.

--Editing by Philip Shea.

