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Council tells developer: Scale back house plans

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HAVERTHILL -- If the city does not settle on the proposed Ayers Hill development, it will be heading to land court next week, but some councilors said negotiations are heading in the wrong direction.

Lowell developer K. William Krikorian sued Haverhill last summer after the city turned down his plan for a 115-home development for people over 55 off Amesbury Road. In February, Mr. Krikorian and his lawyer, Scott F. Gleason of Haverhill, presented the city with a proposed settlement of 100 homes, which reserved 10 of them as "affordable" units -- below market rate -- and made two units wheelchair accessible. Councilors asked for more affordable units and sent the settlement to William S. Faraci, the city's lawyer, to negotiate a better deal.

Though the negotiated proposal increased the number of affordable units to 25, it also increased the number of proposed homes to 115. Last night, most councilors said they were not in favor of the bigger project.

"I would not endorse anything over 100," said Councilor Robert E. Des Marais.

On Councilor James J. Fiorentini's suggestion, the council agreed to ask Mr. Faraci to ask for a decrease to 100 homes in the development, with 15 of the units listed as affordable and four units wheelchair accessible. In addition, the city will ask Mr. Krikorian to donate \$100,000 to the city's affordable housing fund or its recreation fields.

William H. Ryan was the only councilor to vote against sending that request to the developer. He objected to the council dispute over the number of units while the city is

going through a "housing crisis."

"They (lower- to moderate-income residents) can't find a place to live and we're nitpicking about 10 or 15 units," he said. "That's all nonsense. . . . You're going to force this developer to go to a comprehensive permit process."

In such a process, the developer brings his proposal to the state which usually approves a complex if it includes a certain percentage of affordable units.

Mr. Ryan said though a development of houses that each sell for more than \$300,000 will not answer Haverhill's need for more affordable housing, people from other areas of the city would move to the proposed development, freeing up houses and apartments in less expensive parts of the city.

In a letter to Mr. Faraci, Mr. Gleason said the proposed development would generate \$800,000 a year in taxes for the city, while the higher age of residents would reduce the impact on schools.



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