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## Shouting match breaks out over 40B project changes

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MERRIMAC -- Members of the Zoning Board of Appeals and developer K. William Krikorian went head to head in a shouting match Wednesday night. At the root of the problem, said board members, was a failure by Krikorian to communicate about changes to plans for the Village at Merrimac, a Chapter 40B affordable housing project off West Main Street.

The discussion quickly escalated into shouting when board members realized that four houses Krikorian showed on a diagram depicted changes in the design that had already been completed, without prior consent of the board, as had been required.

When board members reminded Krikorian that he was required to appear before the board before changes were made, the developer argued that the houses were still well within the state and federal building codes and accused board members of "micro-managing" his project.

Board member Joshua Jackson categorized Krikorian's action as a "slight audacity." Krikorian rebutted, saying that the houses agreed to were "typical" of what was to actually be built and that the person buying would sign a final plot plan.

At last month's meeting, abutters complained about unsightly mounds of dirt and a retention pond that was accessible to children at the 30-lot, single-family-home subdivision designed for those 55 and older. Another concern raised was a lack of progress with the lottery process to determine who will receive the right to purchase the eight affordable houses. These are reserved for households that fall between 70 percent and 80 percent of the Lawrence-area median income.

Board members were advised by their attorney, Mark Brabrowski, to have the building inspector put a hold on issuing any further certificates of occupancy and new building permits until the developer could come in and explain what was going on with the project.

Board member Arthur Amirault said he went down to the site to do visual inspection and Krikorian accused him of instructing the building inspector to put the hold on the occupancy and building permits. Krikorian also complained that the town was trying to put him out of business by shutting down the project and at the same time continue requiring him to pay \$15,000 a quarter in taxes.

Amirault responded, "I'm going to tell you right now, I don't make decisions without knowing what I'm talking about." Amirault also said that the board, and not him alone, was responsible for making the decisions.

As tempers flared further, Chairman Mark Townsend reminded Krikorian of the "rules of conduct" and that he was "going to have to control himself" if he wanted to continue the hearing. Krikorian left the room briefly and then returned to continue participating in the hearing.

When board members questioned the developer about lack of progress on the housing lottery, Krikorian said that the state regulatory agent would not get back to him over the past six months, but that he had notified town counsel of the problem. Board members told Krikorian that he needed to notify the board directly and not town counsel.

Krikorian then confirmed that he had a signed regulatory agreement for the lottery process with the state and was ready to proceed with building the first affordable house. According to the board's decision, Krikorian is required to build one affordable house after three market-rate homes are constructed.

Krikorian presented the board with a list of changes on the project, which included an increase in size for the market-rate homes from 2,370 square feet to 2,480 square feet, and a decrease in the affordable rate homes from 1,945 square feet to 1,936 square feet.

Board members reminded Krikorian that they had significant

issues with his lack of communication and told him that he was expected to follow the board's decision to a T, just as prior Chapter 40B developers have had to do.

The board then voted 4-0 to approve the changes, with Joshua Jackson abstaining.



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