

Millennium Towers foes step up push for ethics probe of LA Building and Safety chief

Corey Moore, KPCC (Pasadena radio), 9-20-13

Opponents Friday stepped up their push for the L.A. City Ethics Commission to investigate the relationship between Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety interim General Manager Raymond Chan and the developers of the Millennium Hollywood skyscraper project.

The project's critics said their videotaped interview with Chan strengthens their argument that he had a conflict of interest while overseeing the review of the project.

Robert Silverstein, attorney for a coalition of more than 40 community groups that have sued to stop the Millennium Hollywood project, held a news conference in Hollywood Friday morning near the iconic Capitol Records building - the area where the two Millennium Towers would be built.

He said an opposition activist armed with a video camera confronted Chan Thursday in the parking garage of Building and Safety. In the video, the activist notes that from January to May of this year, Chan's son was a paid intern at Sheppard Mullin, the developers' lead law firm, and he asks Chan rhetorically, "Why wouldn't that have influenced and prejudiced your handling of this project, sir?"

Chan responds that he was not involved with the Millennium project until July of this year, after his son's internship had ended.

Referring to that remark, Silverstein said Chan "lies about the timing of his involvement in his department's review of the project's earthquake issues. The smoking gun emails that we obtained through the California Public Records Act show Mr. Chan actively involved with Sheppard Mullin, the attorneys for the developer regarding the Millennium's earthquake problem, as early as March 2012."

Silverstein said the city ethics commission should make the complaint about Chan's handling of the Millennium project a "top priority."

A spokeswoman with the L.A. City Ethics Commission said the panel does not comment in situations such as this. Chan and his spokesman did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

Opponents have also filed a lawsuit that contends city officials and Chan's team illegally hid information about the possibility that the Hollywood earthquake fault runs through the project site.

Plan supporters maintain the project is safe and would provide an economic boost to the city.