

New player in RE/MAX case: drug dealer turned gadfly

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The case of RE/MAX and the Back Bay real estate franchise it sold to the wife of an alleged money launderer has been strange from the start. Yesterday it got stranger still.

On Monday, RE/MAX of New England sued Darlene Carucci, owner of RE/MAX Group in the Back Bay, in an attempt to rescind the franchise it sold her in September.

Back in court yesterday, RE/MAX took aim at W. David Lindholm of Hull, alleging that his picketing of local RE/MAX franchises had disrupted their business and threatened to cause "immediate and devastating irreparable harm to RE/MAX, its good name and reputation and its franchises."

Lindholm's signs and leaflets have accused RE/MAX of condoning organized crime because of the controversy over its Back Bay franchise, even though the other 160 franchises in New England are separately owned and operated and unrelated to RE/MAX Group, according to the complaint.

Although Lindholm's business cards identify him as a "consumer advocate," he is better known in the US attorney's office as a government witness and convicted marijuana dealer. His role in directing one of the big-

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gest marijuana smuggling rings of the 1980s led to an eight-year federal prison sentence. He was released after serving three years.

Lindholm and others picketed RE/MAX franchises on at least six dates during June and July, according to the complaint, which listed the targets as offices in Concord, Sudbury, Westwood, Lexington, Westborough, Framingham, and Andover.

While Lindholm's fellow picketers are identified in the complaint as

his "agents," sources cited reports they had been hired by Lindholm at the Pine Street Inn, a Boston homeless shelter.

In an incident detailed in the complaint, Lindholm is alleged to have picketed an open house held last weekend at a new housing development in Sudbury, where RE/MAX Countryside in Sudbury was exclusive sales agent.

"While at the development, Lindholm verbally accosted RE/MAX's sales agent and repeatedly attempted to prevent prospective purchasers from entering the open house," the complaint said. "In fact, Lindholm's

behavior was so disruptive that the Sudbury Police Department had to be called to the scene." The complaint added that the developer of the Sudbury properties has said he will drop RE/MAX as sales agent if the picketing continues.

Lindholm, who is said to be acting as his own attorney, could not be reached for comment. According to sources, he has said he resents that Michael Carucci, Darlene's husband, is allowed to operate as a real estate broker when Lindholm is not.

Like Lindholm, Carucci is a convicted drug trafficker, having served 10 months in the mid-1980s on cocaine charges. The state Board of Real Estate Brokers and Salesmen gave him two years' probation in 1996 for having concealed his conviction on his application, but he was

allowed to keep his license.

Not everyone accepts that explanation. Lindholm, who was said by the government to have smuggled 45,000 pounds of marijuana into Massachusetts in the 1980s, now makes \$10 an hour as a house painter. A source questioned how he could afford to pay picketers and suggested he might be bankrolled by Back Bay rivals of RE/MAX Group.

Michael Carucci was charged in March with conspiring with codefendant Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi to launder underworld money by investing it in Back Bay real estate. Carucci pleaded innocent and is free on bond.

Flemmi is in jail awaiting trial in a separate racketeering case. One of his accusers, slated to testify for the government, is Lindholm.