

Fullers fired by Habitat directors: Conflict over leadership transition

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Millard and Linda Fuller have been dismissed abruptly from their jobs with Habitat for Humanity International, the worldwide Christian housing ministry they founded and led for nearly three decades, charged with being “divisive and disruptive to the organization’s work” through their public comments.

The Fullers and the Habitat board of directors have been in conflict for several months over a transition of leadership. Directors wanted Millard Fuller to retire as president this month when he turned 70. Fuller wanted to remain at the helm until the 200,000th house is dedicated later this year.

The issue seemed resolved in October when it was announced that Fuller would become “founder president” and serve with his wife, Linda, as ambassadors for the ministry, while daily operations would be conducted by managing director Paul Leonard.

However, board chairman Rey Ramsey, a Baltimore attorney, said in the Habitat press release on January 31 that the board tried repeatedly to resolve differences with the Fullers confidentially, but that the Fullers publicly criticized the board’s efforts. “In every instance, the Fullers ultimately have rejected or been openly critical of any and all steps taken toward appropriate compromise,” said Ramsey.

The release said former president Jimmy Carter expressed his continuing personal friendship with the Fullers, as well as his support of Habitat for Humanity International. He will serve as an honorary chair of the search committee to find Fuller’s successor.

Fuller admitted to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* that he is “a hard charger” and “sometimes damages relationships,” particularly with the Habitat board. In a personal statement released February 1, Fuller called their firings an “extreme decision” but urged continued support for Habitat.

The firings were decried, however, by a Colorado Springs group called Habitat Partners. They called the actions imprudent and ill-advised, saying that if the Fullers were not reinstated, the ministry would suffer greatly. -*Associated Baptist Press*