

Harvard-Devens Jurisdiction Committee Meeting
February 5, 2024
Meeting Conducted Via Zoom

Members attending: Victor Normand, Paul Green, Kara Minar, Don Ludwig, SusanMary Redinger, Heather Knowles, John McCormack

Members absent: George Glazier, Tim Myllykangas

Victor Normand called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

Approval of Minutes:

The 1/8/24 minutes were approved as amended without objection.

Devens Land Availability and MassDevelopment Capital and Operating Budget Update:

Members reviewed the updated land availability map Don received from Meg Delorier of Mass Development (MD).

- Over the past 14 months, it looks like they sold 3 parcels to 2 different buyers for a total of 26 acres.
- Leaving 94 acres that are zoned commercial that are still available. 71 acres have been sold.
- The biggest parcel of which is 32 acres and situated in Shirley.
- All remaining land to be developed that is zoned residential is in the Harvard portion.
- Still waiting on financials from MD

Devens Jurisdiction Framework Committee (DJFC) Update

Next week the DJFC will meet to see if consensus can be reached on the warrant article discussed at the last HDJC meeting at a yet to be scheduled super town meeting that rezones Vicksburg Square (VS). The proposed article was presented and agreed to at a recent Harvard Select Board meeting. If agreed to by the DJFC, the warrant will go back to the towns for a formal vote, then off to MD. If MD approves, then a Super Town meeting would be scheduled.

The DJFC also set up a working group to identify all the issues that the different governance options will need to address. This committee has already done that work for Harvard.

Members discussed potential of Devens becoming its own town.

- Chapter 498 includes looking at that option.
- Is there any support for it from the state/legislature/MD?
- Some Devens residents firmly believe in that option

- Warrant article would not address all of disposition but because it sets VS in Ayer it might take Devens becoming a town off the table.
- Devens is now financially self-sufficient.

Education in Devens:

Paul Green presented a slide deck (attached).

- Chapter 498 requires that land for municipal purposes be set aside, specifically schools.
- MD has not yet done that.
- What will full buildout look like and how many students will be added?
- How to ensure that land is set aside now for any future school building needs?
- Since the type/size of school is unknown and the town(s) needing an additional school are yet to be determined, how do we move forward on securing a potential site?
- Two school districts involved: Harvard and Ayer/Shirley Regional
- Athletic fields should be part of the discussion

Paul will revise the presentation based on members' input and send out again. After budget season is over, maybe invite Harvard's superintendent of schools to join the HDJC at a meeting to review the issues and discuss next steps.

Other Business:

If the DJFC signs off on the warrant language, members agreed that engaging the public and providing information about the issue and super town meeting will need to happen.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:21 am without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

SusanMary Redinger
HDJC

Devens Education Concerns

Harvard-Devens Jurisdiction Committee

February 1, 2024

Paul Green, Heather Knowles, SusanMary Redinger

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Devens Education Concerns

Redevelopment of Devens Is Nearly Complete

- The Reuse Plan for the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone is nearing completion
 - 90% of commercial land has been sold or leased or is not being marketed
 - 10% remains unsold and is being marketed
 - 43% of residential land has been sold or leased
- The cap on housing at 282 units is within 12 units of maxing out and prevents most further residential land sales

Draft for Discussion

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Devens Education Concerns

What's the Problem? Many "Known Unknowns"

- Density of housing at Devens likely to be more "city" than "country" due to presence of municipal fresh and waste water; e.g., like the Emerson Green area
- Date of maximum buildout unknown
- Number of housing units at maximum buildout unknown
- Number of school-age children at maximum buildout unknown
- Mix of single-family and multi-family (apartments; condominiums) unknown
- Mix of unrestricted, age-restricted, income-restricted, unknown
- Fate of Vicksburg Square redevelopment for housing unknown

Draft for Discussion

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Devens Education Concerns

Sample Questions

- When is maximum buildout?
- How many housing units at maximum buildout?
- How many school-age children at maximum buildout?
- How will the mix of types of units affect number of children?
- Will Devens ever have enough children to justify educational uses?
- Who will pay for educational uses?

Draft for Discussion

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Devens Education Concerns

Why Act? Why Now?

- Chapter 498 calls for “allocation of land for public facilities such as schools”
- No specific parcels of land at Devens have allocated for public education!
- While municipal use is allowed in any zone, not all zones are suitable
- Fewer parcels, especially fewer large parcels, will be available in years to come
- Siting options exist today that will not be available at disposition
- We don’t even know for certain whether we will need land for educational use, but by the time we know that, it may be too late to create a great, or even good, solution

Draft for Discussion

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Devens Education Concerns

Recommended Next Steps

- Engage school committees of Ayer, Harvard and Shirley, and the Devens Educational Advisory Committee in a common effort
- At a minimum, work with MassDevelopment to identify and reserve a site now
- Consider impact of various options for permanent local jurisdiction
- Create scenarios that express likely outcomes
- Draft recommendations for parties to implement; educate public

Draft for Discussion

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