

Harvard Devens Jurisdiction Committee Meeting  
July 5, 2023: 11AM  
Meeting Conducted Via Zoom

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

Members absent: George Glazier, Heather Knowles

Others Present: Jim DeZutter (Devens resident), Carl Sciple (DEC), Lucy Wallace (Harvard resident)

Victor Normand called the meeting to order at 11:01 AM

The minutes from June 7, 2023 were approved by majority with one abstention.

**Devens Finances – Questions for MassDevelopment**

Don is waiting on a date from Meg Delorier for a meeting. He will keep working on getting the meeting scheduled.

Victor asked for updates from the recent Select Board's goal setting meeting on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

Kara reported that during the recent Select Board retreat the topic of Devens jurisdiction and the work of the HDJC was discussed. Don reported that Rich Maiore, Chair of the SB did reach out to the SB chair in Ayer and Shirley trying to push forward the conversation re: housing. Don and Rich spoke to Jamie Eldridge during the holiday parade and he's supportive of that conversation moving forward and to getting Ayer. Senator Eldridge had been aware of the proposed housing amendment to alter Chapter 498 and was in favor of it. He essentially agreed that it makes sense to settle jurisdiction first before moving on housing, but nothing about Chapter 498 was discussed.

Senator Eldridge had talked with Senator Cronin. Cronin is unimpressed with the concept of the Super Town meeting and thinks the issue of housing development is paramount. While Senator Eldridge is committed to standing by the language of Chapter 498, Cronin isn't. Dan Rivera from MD and Peter Lowitt from the DEC both previously agreed not to circumvent the process outlined in 498 for any future changes and the SB wrote a follow-up letter to that effect. However, members recognize the legislature could override that agreement.

Using state owned property for developing housing is a major initiative supported by Senator Eldridge. Can we move as fast as 2024? Changing the dates in Chapter 498 would be the first move. If the three towns and MD/legislature can be convinced then we can leverage MD to provide funding for a consultant.

Kara expressed concern over the small size of Harvard vs. the larger interests involved. Could there be a Boston Globe spotlight? e.g. a David vs Goliath story. The towns are at the whim of the legislature. Diversified tax relief. Whatever the state runs through with may override the potential gains that Harvard sees as a positive gain to resuming jurisdiction. Opening up 498 may make things unpalatable for Harvard.

Members discussed the best way to engage the press to begin coverage of this issue. Back channel with a reporter? Put out a press release? Concern was noted about going out without support by the other two towns. Harvard has been taking the lead on this issue for the last five years. If we can bring Shirley and Ayer up to speed and get consensus first the message would have more power. The press may not take the position of supporting the towns and is likely pro-housing development.

Victor said that over the past 18 months he's had two occasions to interact with reporters from Boston Globe. He made the pitch that the residents of Devens are disenfranchised but failed to get any interest on that point despite it being fundamental to our government. Without glaring evidence that something is being done incorrectly, and without knowing how the press would play it, it may not work in our favor. Could Governor Healy or her administration be an ally in this? Overriding local towns' rights isn't usually done. Getting the message out that the best way to develop housing at Vicksburg Square is to settle jurisdiction first is the best way to get things moving.

Development at Vicksburg Square is problematic even if you do gain a developer and a zoning change. What is the end result that the Senators expect out of VSq. John McCormack said that the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust presentation of the next iteration of housing production plan recently came out and a central piece of that plan was VSq. He asked if it is really developable?

Victor replied that Step 1 is to get zoning in place and eliminate the housing cap. It is a huge target for all those who are advocating for an increased housing supply. Tim agreed that there is no easy answer on approach or strategy. There are pro's and con's to each side but getting the three towns on line is obviously a key point.

Victor indicated that there's a meeting next week of the DJFC. He did reach out to Janice Livingston as they formed their Devens Jurisdiction Committee in Ayer. He sent her a copy of the proposed amendment to lift the cap and change the zoning and the rejection. Mike McGovern, town administrator in Shirley, indicated that he thought Shirley would support moving the date up. Shirley gets a Tax benefit for having the federal prison on its land and that benefit is decreasing. Don added that Janice is now vice chair; the new chair is Scott Houde and that one of the ideas being discussed is to have the three SB chairs send a letter to the new Housing Secretary.

Victor asked if members wanted to take a position on an amendment to advance the planning date. Members discussed the potential risks of opening up Chapter 498 and having no control

over what might happen on the floor during legislative debate. Can we go through 498 to fully understand what the traps are on that. What do we want? Why did Cronin do it? Is he just a housing advocate? Eldridge knew about it but didn't think it was going to go anywhere.

Paul Green made the motion that the HDJC open a discussion with the other participants in the process towards investigating whether it makes sense to move up the date of jurisdiction change. Members discussed the best way to word the amendment.

Do members support the concept of advancing the planning date?

What they'll be gunning for in Chapter 498 would be to remove the super town stipulation.

Approach our own SB and the other participants today and schedule a vote for our next meeting after we've had a chance to formally engage our own SB and ensure we have their support.

Anytime you get involved in political action you give up a certain amount of control in the process.

September might be a better time for the HDJC to vote to ensure attendance.

Paul Green made the motion to have the HDJC chair approach the other participants in the Devens disposition process with respect to moving the target disposition date earlier than 2033

Motion was seconded by Don Ludwig.

Victor suggested that the vehicle for moving this forward would be the Framework Committee meeting next week.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Other Business**

Carl Sciple gave his support to moving up the disposition date.

Paul Green suggested in September that we revisit the meeting day/time for this board and that we entertain hosting another public forum to engage residents and other interested individuals in this discussion.

### **Public Comment**

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:44am by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

SusanMary Redinger, recording secretary