

Harvard-Devens Jurisdiction Committee
Meeting Held using the Zoom Videoconferencing Facility
Minutes of the April 7, 2022 Meeting
Paul Green, Clerk

Attendance

Members Present: Richard Cabelus, George Glazier, Paul Green, Heather Knowles, Rich Maiore, Kara Minar, Tim Myllykangas, Victor Normand, SusanMary Redinger.

Members Absent: None.

Guests: Jane Biering (Harvard resident), Jim DeZutter (Harvard resident, member of the DEC), Lucy Wallace (Harvard resident), John Osborn (Harvard Press).

Victor Normand called the meeting to order at 10:01 am.

Approval of Minutes

The committee approved the February 3, 2022 and March 3, 2022 minutes. SusanMary moved and Rich seconded.

DJFC Update

Victor noted that MassDevelopment has withdrawn from the Framework Committee and anticipates rejoining in 2030. He polled each member in turn asking for their opinion on the letter.

SusanMary noted that she is already creating enrollment projections for the Harvard schools up to 2031, and is shocked by their withdrawal. Heather noted that our projections are that it will take 5 to 8 years to craft a plan and then we go into a 2 year legislative cycle. She said that 2 year delay may be acceptable but not more than that. She also noted that the original rationale for the Framework Committee was to create a framework, and it did that, and then morphed into the action committee. She proposed that we continue on the current work items; the RFEI and MOA.

Victor noted that MassDevelopment withdrew; the committee still exists and he intends to keep holding Framework Committee meetings.

Jane was struck by the tone of the withdrawal letter, and wondered about their motivation. The letter was dismissive.

George asked who will fill the role provided by MassDevelopment. Lucy noted that the law only requires them to approve the final study. She feels the committee can continue if the remaining members agree to it. The committee still needs money to carry out its work. We may need to work with our state representatives on that. A new state administration may be more amenable to working with the towns. The Vicksburg Square project is still out there. Heather said there are rumors that MassDevelopment may go to the legislature to change the zoning.

Kara noted that Devens residents are still disenfranchised at the local government level. Heather agreed that she and her neighbors should bring this up with their legislators.

Paul suggested that we take the withdrawal of MassDevelopment as a blessing in disguise. He noted that the spartan description of the planning process in Chapter 498 has enabled MassDevelopment to walk away. We know the process can't be done in 3 years. The Legislative step alone will take 2 years, in his view. He suggested that this committee talk to the other similar committees and define the process we'd prefer to use, and define the timeline we wish to adopt, and then use them. He feels that through our normal legislative process, we can enact the process we want to use. We can certainly figure out the cost of the work we think is needed; we need this number before we can ask Jamie and Dan for money. We are so far down this we can't stop now.

Rich said that the letter is an insult and warrants a response from the Harvard Select Board. He agrees that the Framework Committee should continue, and thus not lose time.

George asked if MassDevelopment can come back in at the end and put their own plan on the table. Victor noted that they can do anything. Heather felt that the towns are the major players in the eyes of the Legislature. Tim asked if we can keep working; do we need to wait for 2030? Victor noted that the legislation says "on or before 2030".

Tim noted that we just requested and received the MassDevelopment Profit and Loss statement and Balance Sheet, and the timing of the withdrawal is therefore suspect. Richard agreed that the timing is peculiar, and agrees that the letter is an insult. He agreed that perhaps the 3 towns can get to work on their own. Maybe we can get an earmark in the next state budget for a consultant.

Victor feels there is strength in numbers. We are offended but we want to move forward. He will bring this to the Framework Committee next week.

Lucy noted that we are almost ready to send out our request for information to find out the cost of a consultant. A town can post it without MassDevelopment's help.

SusanMary said that continuing the work of the Framework Committee with Shirley, Ayer, and the other members, is the best way to exert pressure on MassDevelopment. She supports continuing the work.

Jane suggested we both keep moving forward with the work of the Framework Committee, and in parallel figure out the underlying reasons for the letter from Jessica.

Tim asked who MassDevelopment reports to? Who can we appeal to? Victor explained the structure of the MassDevelopment board, and that they are appointed by the governor and noted that MassDevelopment does not have a constituency, whereas the

town committees do have a constituency. He feels this is about power, not about money.

Paul suggested that we ask the businesses at Devens to contact MassDevelopment about reengaging. Kara agreed but also noted that the businesses have only interfaced in the past with MassDevelopment. We need to give them confidence that we will not make major changes. She proposed that we ask for an audit of the MassDevelopment operations at Devens. She repeated her earlier remarks on disenfranchisement.

Heather noted that the Devens Educational Advisory Committee will weigh in, too.

Richard drew a parallel between legal cases that use a “special master” to create a plan by which multiple parties can work towards an agreement, and our work here. We need information, and we need to be able to present it in a way that our fellow citizens can understand.

Discuss Harvard Vision Statement Summary

Victor asked the committee to vote on our vision statement, and said that it is a clear statement of Harvard’s current position. Once approved, he will submit it to the Harvard Select Board. The next step will be to hold community meetings to show it to the citizens of Harvard and Devens and get their feedback. This is our position; it is not an accomplished decision.

SusanMary asked if we know how many residents live in Devens. We should show how many people are impacted by these decisions.

The memo includes maps that show the historical town boundaries of Shirley, Ayer, and Harvard in the Devens area. The map shows that a significant portion of the historical boundaries Harvard lie within Devens, and it demonstrates why Harvard needs to know what the future holds for Devens. The Nashua river divides Shirley and Lancaster from Harvard and Ayer. The east-west segmented line divides Ayer and Harvard, bisecting the Vicksburg Square area and moving alongside Barnum Road. A smaller map focuses on the areas zoned for housing, which are in the vicinity of Rogers Field and Vicksburg Square. Victor noted that about 60% of the Devens land lies with Harvard, and about 80-85% of the commercial areas lie with the historical boundaries of Harvard.

SusanMary and Tim Myllykangas moved and seconded to approve the vision statement. The committee adopted it without objection.

Devens Budgets

Victor said that he and Richard had obtained the financial documents from MassDevelopment. There is a lot of good information in the documents. He, Richard, and Tim will summarize it for the committee in a future meeting.

Other Business

No other business.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Victor adjourned the meeting at 11:05 am.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for May 5, 2022, at 10 AM, on Zoom.

Attachments

1. Copy of letter from Jessica Strunkin to members of the Devens Jurisdiction Framework Committee.

From: Vnormand vnormand@aol.com

Subject: Fwd: DJFC Update

Date: April 6, 2022 at 2:04 PM

To: glaziergp@gmail.com, kminar01451@gmail.com, paulg1973@icloud.com, rdmaiore@gmail.com, richard@cabeluslaw.com, smredinger@charter.net, tmylykangas@cresa.com, Vnormand vnormand@aol.com, weasbeckknowles@gmail.com

Cc: janebiering@charter.net, lbwallace34@aol.com

VN

To be discussed at tomorrow's meeting.

-----Original Message-----

From: Strunkin, Jessica <JStrunkin@Massdevelopment.com>

Good Morning Members of the DJFC,

I want to thank all of you for your time and efforts on the Devens Jurisdiction Framework Committee. Given the many matters facing Devens in regards to our primary mission around commercial redevelopment, running day-to-day operations, and maintaining a safe and healthy community, effective immediately we will discontinue participation in discussions related to the permanent governance of Devens. The law does not require real progress on the matter of final disposition until July 1, 2030; we expect to reengage in these discussions with all parties closer to that timeframe.

Sincerely,

Jessica Strunkin

Executive Vice President Devens

MassDevelopment

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