

Harvard Devens Jurisdiction Committee Meeting
November 3, 2022

Members attending: Victor Normand, SusanMary Redinger, Paul Green, George Glazer, Tim Myllykangas, Don Ludwig (joined 10:18am)

Members absent: Heather Knowles, Kara Minar, John McCormack

Others Present: Neil Angus (DEC member)

Victor Normand called the meeting to order at 10:07

The minutes from October 6, 2022 were approved as amended unanimously.
The minutes of the October 19, 2022 were approved unanimously as amended, pending the addition of missing names and dates.

The DFJC will not meet again until January. Ayer and Shirley are still working on putting their committees together. Devens residents are becoming more engaged and working to organize.

Budget will be covered later in the meeting after Don joins.

Feedback from the public forum: Great attendance: 53 on line, 35 @ meeting. It's the largest public meeting we've had for this committee. Great publicity. AV/Technology worked well. Venue worked well (minor issues with zoom starting on time and sound but that worked out). Heard new voices represented. Good questions, informing the public was a good idea. Good presentations.

Takeaways:

1. Property tax question from Devens resident needs a more in-depth answer from us.
2. Heather was speaking with a group of attendees that may need to be debriefed.
3. Point raised by the Select Board Chair about including other options to present to the town. Until we have other direction from the SB it's unclear whether or not we change our work.
4. Clearing up the question around the SB Chair's assertion that this committee has expressed a need for building a new school on Devens.

Evergreen pre-school (directly across from the current firehouse) is being converted to a new public safety building (expanded).

Victor would like to see the point about taxes be further developed and questions answered. Need to sit down with Mass Dev't and determine how the revenues/costs work in more detail. Land sale revenue/lease revenue. Under Chapter 498 the DEC has the right to tax businesses and residents.

Victor asked SusanMary about an assertion made by the town administrator that Mass Devt was not paying the full cost of education for the Devens students. SusanMary affirmed that the cost charged to Mass Dev't for each student attending Harvard schools is, by contract, the per pupil cost as established by DESE each year. She indicated that the report prepared by Tim Bragan and Marie Sobalvarro contains inaccuracies that the school committee is looking to correct with the select board and the finance committee at an upcoming meeting. The per pupil cost is higher than the choice student cost of \$5k which has been capped since 2010.

Victor explained that a recent letter he received from Jamie Eldridge indicated that the legislation wording has changed regarding the increased cap for commercial development that was agreed to by the Harvard Select Board. Instead of increasing it from 8.5M sq ft to 12m sq total, the governor changed the language to allow for a total of 20.5M (adding 12m to the current 8.5m sq). Victor will reach out to the select board to determine if a response is warranted.

The committee discussed next steps.

Paul suggested taking a stand on the cap issue. He also suggested HDJC members reach out to their contacts to supporting the filling of the committees in Ayer and Shirley.

Next meeting – review the list of items in the summary plan – did we miss anything? Victor would like to see us prepare a communication to the other stakeholders. Get feedback from Devens residents on their take on the plan and what they'd like to see as a plan for their future.

Cindy Carter (Devens resident) – added that she likes the way Mass Devt has been running things so far. She has solar (Wellesley power), Devens is a nice community, things are taken care of before she has to ask, Mass Devt and the DEC have been ahead of the needs (e.g. water), planning, taking care of the environment. Very happy with the status quo.

Victor will keep moving forward with Don on the financial analysis. Jane added that at the public forum, the possibility was raised that for residents of both towns the tax rates could be reduced by joining forces – even Devens rates could be reduced? Is that a possibility? Don agreed that it's possible but that's the information we need to get to.

Paul expressed that taxes are only a portion of what it costs to live in a certain town/area. Other factors are utilities, commuting, groceries, childcare, et

Devens residents could see a reduction in their taxes (e.g. if there are savings due to combined staff/services)

SusanMary agreed that determining the costs to residents will be the primary driver in whether or not they will support resuming jurisdiction. She asked if we have the data on taxes paid by Devens residents. Victor explained that we have gotten the tax recapitulation sheet and while it is not in the format used by Harvard, doing some calculations has shown that Devens

residents pay about \$130 per month less than Harvard residents in property taxes. SusanMary suggested that the additional commercial development will also help to defray property taxes. Getting firmer numbers is critical.

Victor Normand adjourned the meeting without objection at 11:01am.

Respectfully submitted,

SusanMary Redinger, recording secretary