

Devens Committee - Meeting Minutes - Hybrid Meeting
02.01.23 @ 6:30pm-8:00pm, DC Meeting @ 33 Andrews Parkway, Devens, M

Chaired by: Tracy Clark

Minutes rec. by: Michael Alves

Attendance: Tracy Clark (Chair), Chetan Mistry (late), Michael Alves (Vice Chair and Acting Secretary); Regrets: Cindy Carter & Bill Duston; Mass Development: Meg Delorier (Zoom), State Police: Lt. Reid Bagley, DPW: Shane Melone, Residents: Phil Fama, Susan Gabriel and Jim Gellar; Harvard Press: John Osbourne;

Called to Order: Tracy called the meeting to order at 6:47pm.

Standing Items: There were no standing items.

Approval of Prior Minutes: Tracy had a couple of comma corrections in the 01/02/23 meeting minutes. A motion to accept the previous minutes was made by Chetan and seconded by Michael. It was approved with a 3-0 vote.

Current Meeting Agenda: The current meeting's agenda was reviewed for accuracy.

Public Comments:

Ice Rink Available: Meg Delorier says to use the ice rink, Saturday & Sunday due to cold weather.

Emergency Assistance Center: Meg says, the Emergency Assistance Center at the Bob Eisengrein Community Center has 77 clients. Things are going well and there are no problems. There has been an increase in occupancy to about 70-80 people on average. The Devens Newsletter has information regarding donations that the center is in need of. Donations can be dropped off to Devens DPW. Bring them to Shane.

Devens Building Cap: Jim Gellar, 43 Walnut St., stated he joined the DEC meeting last night, where they reviewed the Annual Report. The report referenced the buildout of Devens from 8.5 million sq. ft. to 12 million sq. ft. Jim's question. Expanding that development is above and beyond what was in the Devens plan, put together in 1996. DEC was able to get approval by going to the legislature and bypassing the 3 towns. DEC went to select boards w/ no Super Town Vote. Tracy says the 3 towns were approached. Meg says, Legislature can amend any legislature. #498, says either Super Town Meeting or through the legislature can amend the development cap. Devens EC, Shirley & Ayer voted to do away with the cap. Harvard asked to cap it at 12 million sq ft. An earlier MEPA report also recommended removing the cap. Legislature and governor's office, instead of capping it at 12 million, added 12 million capping it at 20 million. There are other guardrail mechanisms, such as water usage or traffic limits. The legislature can amend the legislature anytime they want. Jim referenced the housing cap for Devens. The developer wanted an additional 6 units that were agreed too. Did those 6 additional units take us over the cap? Tracy says, the original Emerson Green plan took us closer to the cap. The apartment building from Emerson Green will not exceed the 282 cap? Susan Gabriel referenced the governors looking to work on housing shortage and the relationship to Devens having room for expansion. Meg hasn't been approached about it yet. If there was an interest in expanding the housing cap in Devens, the legislature would want to bring it to the towns and residents to discuss, but she can't speak for them. No one has talked to Mass Development about it yet, but it could be a possible conversation going forward. Tracy says, DEC is the zoning body for Devens. We would want to be appraised about this. Tracy has found DEC to be receptive to reasonable conversation. Jim Gellar thinks the legislature could again choose to amend the residential cap. He's trying to understand the mechanisms for how they got around the Super Town vote. Michael Alves asked where he read about the Super Town vote. Jim said he used to be on the Devens Committee and it's in Chapter 498.

Vicksburg Square: Jim Gellar, Vicksburg Square has a big hole in the roof. Is Mass Development monitoring the status of those roofs? Meg says the engineering department monitors those buildings. DPW takes care of things. Shane (DPW) has toured through those buildings and inspected that hole 2 months ago. The buildings are brick, mortar and concrete, so he's less concerned about rot, but it's poor to have standing water. It's on their radar and he has talked to asset management dept and engineering dept, but they don't know what the directive will be yet. Jim assumes if nature continues to take its course. At one point in time it became impossible to redevelop those buildings. Meg says they're on the historic register. Mass Development would have to work with the Commonwealth Historic Commission if the buildings are beyond development. At this point they're not there yet. They're still waiting for someone to want to come and develop those buildings. It's

been 25 years and there have been no takers. Tracy says there was a developer interested at one point until they weren't. Time is not on the building's side in waiting. He thinks Mass Development should rezone the building from innovation / lab space to maybe residential, education or other, to allow something to happen. He thinks there's an opportunity here to address housing and the building. Meg says they were unsuccessful in changing the zoning. If a developer wanted to redevelop it and change the zoning, Mass Development wouldn't be opposed to it. You'd still have to address hitting the housing cap problem. Tracy says, you'd have to consider addressing the housing cap #. Jim says, would Mass Development or the legislature decide to change the legislation on its own without doing a Super Town meeting. Meg says, When Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS) came, they went to the legislature to change legislation so that BMS could come and exceed the building height. The legislature did this so they could attract new businesses here. **Rezoning Devens & Raising the housing cap. She's not sure how Mass Development would Vote.** Vicksburg square is zoned for Innovation and Technology. It could be education, technology, not retail, not heavy industry, Jim says Vicksburg square is central to the Devens community. He'd rather see you raze it, vs. see it crumble.

Devens Water: Meg says, there is enough water capacity to bring Harvard onto the Devens water supply. The cost of doing that would be borne unto by Harvard. Jim Moore, says there's more than enough water to share and continue with the Devens redevelopment. Water use is outside of the development sq. cap. Shane says he's o.k. sharing water as long as it doesn't affect his irrigation system. Tracy asked if the water Harvard's going to use is extra and outside the cap for Devens residents and businesses. Meg says residential water use is nowhere near the use of commercial water use.

Devens Residential Growth: Phil Fama asked if residential growth was beneficial to mass development? Meg was stumped. Residential growth is beneficial to the commonwealth, was her reply. Meg says they're not increasing the residential cap in Devens. Mass Development finances 100's of thousands of residential developments across the commonwealth. If it was agreed too, they would look to increase the housing.

Devens Museum Land: Jim Gellar asked about the fence around the quadrangle behind the Devens Museum 98 Jackson Rd. He wanted to know, what's the intent there? Is the intent to tear those buildings down? Shane says, those 3 buildings behind the fence, were purchased by New England Studios as well as the parking. NE Studios, fenced it off. Meg says NE Studios has plans for those and Mass Development is waiting to see those plans. NE Studios took the option to purchase those and the parking lot when they purchased NE Studios current site.

Devens State Police: Susan asked if the officers are always the same people. Lt. Reid Bagley says, there are 10 officers here. If the shifts aren't fulfilled, they get troopers from other departments. They have a tech unit, drone unit, gang unit. You constantly see marked cars going to the driving unit.

Newsletter & Website Communications: Mike Alves, asked if we can share bullet points and links with Karen for the newsletter. Meg says who's going to manage the docs. Tracy asked who manages the Mass Development website. Meg says they have a marketing department that edits and puts together the final newsletter. They are limited in what they can host and do. Tracy has the name and email of the person who started the old, <http://devenscommittee.weebly.com>, website. Mike Cormier who lived in a condo on Elm St started the website. Susan says she'd volunteer to have a bio on each of the board members.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

Ending Items: None.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be 6:30pm, Wednesday, March 1, 2023 @ 33 Andrews Parkway.

Next Meeting Objectives: The objectives for the next meeting were reviewed and discussed (agenda and minutes).

Current Meeting - Adjourned: The current meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm by Tracy Clark.