

Devens Economic Analysis Team ("DEAT")

**Minutes of November 4, 2010 Meeting
8:00am - 10:00am
Fireplace Meeting Room, Old Library**

Orville Dodson, Clerk

Members Present: Orville Dodson, Duncan Chapman, Steve Finnegan, Victor Normand, Paul Green.

Victor Normand called the meeting to order at 8:00am. The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss economic and budgeting issues with Tim Bragan who was present.

The minutes of the prior meeting (10/15) were reviewed. Steve Finnegan presented a rewording of the paragraph beginning "Victor brought up the search for additional DEAT members....." that he thought was needed. The members voted unanimously to defer the approval of the 10/15 minutes to the next DEAT meeting.

Victor then gave the floor to Tim Bragan to begin the discussion of municipal economics and budgeting. Tim first mentioned that studies of regionalization of police, DPW, and dispatch have been occurring for some time. Three attempts to regionalize dispatch have been made in the past, to no avail. When George Ramirez came onboard at Devens, he began studies of how much Fire, Police, and DPW should cost at Devens, in preparation for Devens putting out an RFQ to towns in the state for providing those services to Devens on contract. These efforts to contract out Fire, Police, and DPW are driven by a growing shortage of money at Devens. As an aside, Tim mentioned that all of the new buildings at Devens have excellent fire suppression. Shirley, and, more so, Ayer are doing research on the costs of Fire, Police, and DPW at Devens in preparation to responding to the Devens RFQ's. Harvard is doing the same. So, from Harvard's point of view, there are two Devens cost studies currently underway: 1) The study by Devens of what those costs should be at Devens, and 2) The study by Harvard of those same costs in preparation to responding to Devens' RFQ's.

Victor then turned to municipal budgeting. He asked Tim how he would put together a budget for a combined Harvard plus Harvard's part of Devens. Tim said one thing he would do is count miles of road. He mentioned that Harvard has volunteer Fire whereas Devens has professional. He said there are formulae for fire cost based upon total square feet of Residential and of Commercial structure, per age of structures, per type of construction, and so on. He mentioned that part of the final disposition and costs of operating it depend upon what the citizens of Harvard will accept (politics) and, after that, what this chosen disposition will cost to operate, the latter being the easier to determine. Victor remarked that there are two ways for Harvard to be involved in the running of its part of Devens or a greater part of it. One is to do it under contract to a Devens entity. The second is for Harvard to absorb its (or a greater part) of Devens and run it as part of the Town of Harvard.

Tim returned to costs and budgeting. He said an easy approach to budgets is to use the "usual" percentage of town budgets going to schools verses fire verses police, etc., and apply them to the known income (revenue) one is dealing with. Victor remarked that the percentages used should come from towns in Harvard's part of the state. Tim said police cost is often done on basis of population. He said DPW is often a function of miles of road, acres of lawn to maintain, and so forth. Victor remarked

that what the DEAT might want to produce is a “recap sheet”. Steve felt that that could be a major deliverable of the DEAT.

Victor asked Tim to produce an outline of Harvard’s town budget. Tim recommended using the incoming department budgets for the next year since they all run out five years to 2017. Victor asked if Harvard has a budget template. Tim said we have a spreadsheet but that it doesn’t have the level of detail that the incoming budgets contain. Victor felt that that was OK since the DEAT probably doesn’t need that level of detail. The spreadsheet has 25 “slots” – we can fill in the values and see what we get. Victor asked Tim to provide a list of towns similar to Harvard. Tim will look for towns of 5000 to 10,000 population with a similar industrial base to a combined Harvard plus Devens. Tim mentioned that the state Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services (DOR/DLS) is the best source of information about the revenue and expenses of towns throughout the state. This data lies in an online database and accessible to the public.

As the meeting began to wrap up, Victor asked Tim if he would be willing to be a “reality check” to us in our work and Tim said yes. Victor announced that Patty Wenger and Maureen Babcock are new members of DEAT will be the liaisons between the DEAT and the town schools. He announced that Mass Dev has yet to reply to our letter asking for 1) An update on the Devens Parcel Analysis, 2) A list of committed and projected capital projects at Devens, and 3) Arrange a meeting between our Paul Green and Sandy Duncan and Devens’ Utilities Manager. We therefore shall proceed on our own. He asked all members to study the DOR/DLS database and at the next meeting we will decide who works on each of the 25 or so “columns” in Harvard’s current budget template.

It was then moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn. This was agreed to unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 10:00am.