

Devens Economic Analysis Team ("DEAT")

Minutes of September 7, 2011 Meeting

7:00 pm – 9:00pm

Town Hall Meeting Room

Orville Dodson, Clerk

Members Present: Victor Normand, Steve Finnegan, Steve Colwell, Duncan Chapman, Orville Dodson, Pat Wenger, Maureen Babcock.

Also present: Selectman Ron Ricci, Selectwoman Marie Sobalvarro.

Victor Normand called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

The minutes of our prior meeting (8/31/2011) were reviewed, a couple of errors were corrected. It was moved and seconded that the corrected minutes be approved and the vote was unanimous to approve.

Victor moved directly to the first draft of our Vicksburg report which he had just completed. This report contained a section for each of 5 major topics at Vicksburg which we (the DEAT) have been asked to study. Each of these sections in the draft was discussed and reviewed and this occupied most of the meeting. In order, the discussion of the topics proceeded as follows:

Topic 1: "Projected revenues from property taxes based on Trinity proposal":

Steve Finnegan had made some edit and rewrite changes for this section and will forward them to Victor. We did not discuss Steve's changes since they aren't in the report yet. At this point Steve Colwell asked the general question of whether our report should offer any recommendations. Victor's opinion was no – that our report should primarily provide data from which others could draw conclusions or use in their decision making. Marie Sobalvarro tended to agree whereas Ron Ricci thought some recommendations might be in order. Steve Finnegan and Pat Wenger leaned toward recommendations. In the end, Victor asked all of us to consider whether recommendations should be made and to make the decision yes/no for recommendations at our next meeting.

Topic 2: "Review of demographic data provided by Trinity, especially as it relates to school population"

Most discussion concerned school-age child population estimates by Trinity for Vicksburg. It was pointed out that for special needs students the Commonwealth of Massachusetts considers age 3-21 as "school age" whereas Trinity considers 6-18 as school-age for all students. Maureen said that Trinity's number of 77 for the school-age population might be low due to single-parent children and the large number of 1-bedroom units at Vicksburg.

Part of our study of school-age population was to get actual real world numbers for nearby LIHTC projects in Walpole, Raynham, and Plainville. To that end Victor had tried to get numbers for Walpole by talking to the developer of the project. The developer was reluctant to provide numbers mostly in deference to a fellow-developer (Trinity). We discussed alternate means to get some numbers for Walpole, Raynham, and Plainville. Our state representative or senator might be able to point us to the

person in state government who could provide numbers. It was thought that perhaps Janet Vellante could talk to comparable officials in those towns for the numbers. Maureen Babcock offered to talk to NESDEC and get their general numbers of school-age children per unit as a function of number of bedrooms in the unit and of income levels.

Topic 3: “Study effect on costs and requirements for all other services”:

We discussed the validity of Trinity's \$9239 per year incremental cost to educate pupils from Vicksburg. No conclusions were drawn. It was generally agreed that a mention of Trinity's assumption that Vicksburg's population would be split across Ayer and Harvard along the historic town boundary lines which put most of Vicksburg into Ayer may not be true. Many people would like to see all of Vicksburg under a single town's jurisdiction. Thus all of Vicksburg could end up being in Ayer, in Harvard, or in a new town of Devens.

Topic 4: “Anticipated demand of proposed housing units by Harvard municipal employees and current residents desiring to 'down size'”:

It was agreed to include Trinity's schedule of rents (affordable and market-rate) in this section of our final report.

Under the second sub-heading (“Area Workforce”), the mathematical soundness of the “30% of population could qualify” number was discussed. It was thought that 30% per se might not be accurate because incomes aren't equally distributed but that the actual per-cent would not differ from 30% by very much.

We mostly accepted the “Town of Harvard Municipal Workforce” sub-heading.

In the “Future Devens Workforce” sub-heading we decided to add a note to the referenced Table 4 stating that the table assumes that the salary listed is the sole source of income for the family and that the salaries for each occupation are the average for the North Central Massachusetts area.

Topic 5: “Comments”:

For the “Harvard's Affordable Housing Liability” sub-heading, we decided to add mention that Trinity plans to develop Vicksburg in phases as Low Income Housing tax credits become available and thus that all of Vicksburg's contribution to Harvard's 40B count might not occur at the project's commencement. 40B credits arrive at the time that a building permit is issued which could stretch out over time as the phases are constructed.

For the “Disposable Income” sub-heading, we decided to include Trinity's numbers and calculations, probably from their June 27, 2011 reply to our follow-up questions, question number 18. We also decided to include Victor's calculation of disposable income assuming an ownership model at Vicksburg with 75% market-rate, 25% affordable.

For the “Historic Preservation” sub-heading, we decided to present Trinity's time-line for Vicksburg build-out which runs to 2017. We will mention Mass Dev's obligation to preserve structures in the Historic District at Devens which includes Vicksburg in order to make the point that waiting to develop Vicksburg would not threaten the structures. Further, we will note that delaying the development of Vicksburg might be less costly to Mass Dev since the costs to maintain the roof, windows, etc. would

probably be much less than Mass Dev's costs to educate school-age children at Vicksburg.

Victor wrapped up the meeting by asking members to consider whether recommendations should be part of our final report and, if so, what recommendations we might make. We should all work on edits and additions we would like to see in the final report. Our next meeting will be devoted mostly to incorporating these suggestions into the report.

It was then moved and seconded that we adjourn. The vote was unanimous and we did adjourn at about 9pm.