

Devens Economic Analysis Team (“DEAT”)

Minutes of May 15, 2015 Meeting

8:00 AM

Hildreth House

Paul Green, Secretary

Members Present: Victor Normand, Paul Green, Christopher Roy, Steve Finnegan, Noyan Kinayman.
Members Absent: None.

Victor Normand, Chairman of DEAT, call the meeting to order at 8 am.

Old Business

Approval of Minutes

Paul passed out minutes of our meeting of April 24, 2015. The Committee unanimously approved them.

New Business

Conservation Costs of Operation and Upkeep

Steve reported that he and Chris have yet to make progress on this topic.

Victor said that we are looking for a rough estimate of the costs of knowledge of who manages it.

Noyan’s Review of our previous reports.

Noyan reported that his research has discovered that the Mass Biotech Council has designated Devens, Cambridge, and Waltham as “Platinum” level areas for the biotech industry in Massachusetts.

Victor, Paul, and Steve reviewed the history of Devens for the benefit of Noyan. They said that this committee deals with the economic issues relating to Devens. We try to “take the economic issues off the table”, and figure out whether Devens would be an economic threat to Harvard.

Victor noted that Devens has open real estate listings, which means that any broker can bring forward a client.

Noyan asked if Harvard can use the Devens fresh and waste water facilities.

Paul said the answer was yes, by law. The question is how to pay for it. Both MassDevelopment and Ayer could provide services to Harvard (e.g., the Harvard C district in north Harvard). Or Harvard could build its own facility.

Steve offered to provide Duncan Chapman's contact info to Noyan. Duncan was on our committee and is knowledgeable about Devens. He serves on the Devens Enterprise Commission now.

Noyan discussed this research into biotech, housing, utilities, and Boston Globe stories and editorials.

Victor reviewed the definitions of affordability for housing. At Devens, 10% of the homes must be affordable by people making less than or equal to 80% of the AMI (adjusted median income). 15% of the homes must be affordable by people making between 80% and 120% of the AMI. These guidelines are enforced by the DEC.

Noyan asked about Vicksburg Square – when would it be redeveloped? We said that we didn't know; it was going to be an expensive project and would probably require public money or a tax deal. He asked if Devens was a financial burden to Harvard. We said no; it is completely handled by MassDevelopment. We also discussed how MassDevelopment pays the costs of educating students who live on Devens.

Noyan asked how the Master Plan for Harvard relates to Devens.

Victor is on the Master Plan steering committee, which has just issued an RFP for the work to look at Devens and how it will impact aspects of Harvard. A master plan must contain certain elements. It can identify uncertainty and suggest ways to resolve these.

Noyan has read our report on Devens Utilities and asked where it stands today.

Victor said that today, MassDevelopment owns and runs Devens Utilities and can develop the electrical or other utility services without going to the ratepayers. Once Devens is all developed, we (the DEAT) sees a benefit to making Devens Utilities into a public utility. We hope that MassDevelopment will be transparent when they decide to divest the utilities, and then the towns can weigh in.

Noyan said that he had put himself in the position of a CEO of a company, and asked the question "What type of utility, investor-owned or public, would be best for my company?"

Chris listed several benefits of a public utility: (1) Muni rates are usually lower, (2) Muni work crews are solely dedicated to a town.

Paul listed another benefit: (1) the Concord Muni is on a long-term plan to bury its utility wires. He knows of no investor-owned utility that is doing this.

Victor noted that we are proposing to create a super utility, which would offer electric, gas, fresh water, wastewater, and storm water services for public areas.

Steve asked if we knew how much money had been invested in the utilities?

Victor said that MassDevelopment issues a P&L statement but they have not issued a Balance Sheet. He noted that the reserve funds generated and held by the utilities belong to the ratepayers, not to MassDevelopment.

Select Future Meeting Dates and Locations

The next meeting date was set for Friday, June 5, 2015, at 8am in Hildreth House.

Zoning Discussion

Victor departed to avoid participating in this discussion, as he has a client who is actively seeking to close a deal at Devens.

The remaining members discussed the upcoming Zoning Articles.

Paul offered to set up a tour of Devens for Noyan and himself, so that they could see the areas under discussion.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 am.