MASSACHUSETTS DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AGENCY

**Meeting of the Board of Directors**

**(*conducted entirely by Remote Participation*)**

**Thursday, October 14, 2021**

**10:30 a.m. (Devens Residents Session)**

**M I N U T E S**

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Ashley Stolba, Designee for Secretary of Housing & Economic Development, Acting Chair

Brian Kavoogian, Vice Chair

Mark Attia, Designee for Secretary of Administration & Finance

James Chisholm

Kristina Spillane

DIRECTORS ABSENT: Joan Corey

Francesca Maltese

Juan Carlos Morales

Ellen Zane

Agency Staff: Dan Rivera, President and CEO

Ricks Frazier, General Counsel and Secretary

Simon Gerlin, Chief Financial Officer

Marcos Marrero, EVP, Community Development

Cassandra McKenzie, EVP, Real Estate

Jessica Strunkin, EVP, Devens

Victoria Stratton, Recording Secretary

Hilary Andrews

Kelly Arvidson

LT Reid Bagley, Devens Fire Department

Graeme Brown

Jeff Buckley

Jennifer Cohen

Karen Davis

Meg Delorier

Nick Giaquinto

Michael Ray Jefferies

Lisa Kalinowski

Dena Kavanagh

Brett Kimball

Orlando Lewis

Alejandro Lopez

John Marc Aurele

Mike Mitchell

Jim Moore

Leigh Natola

Kelsey Schiller

Ed Starzec

Gary Walker

Guests: Neil Angus, Devens Enterprise Commission (“DEC”)

Maureen Babcock, Devens Education Advisory Committee (“DEAC”)

Tracy Clark, Devens resident

Lt. Col. Trent Colestock, Ft. Devens

Kristen Cullen, Commonwealth Fusion Systems

Melissa Federhoff, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce

Peter Lowitt, DEC

Erin McBee, Harvard resident

Dona Neely, Devens Eco-Efficiency Center

Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager, Town of Ayer

Tyson Reynoso, King Street Properties, Inc.

Other Devens Residents and Members of the General Public

Following the morning session and a short break, the meeting of the Board of Directors of Massachusetts Development Finance Agency (“MassDevelopment” or the “Agency”) resumed at 10:31 a.m.

[*Secretary’s Note: It was noted that this meeting with the residents of Devens and others was taking place entirely remotely – via videoconference – pursuant to Section 20 of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, as well as the Agency’s Remote Participation Policy. Access codes for general public use were included in the Public Notice for this meeting.*]

Ms. Strunkin welcomed everyone, virtually, to the Devens Community portion of the annual MassDevelopment Board of Directors’ meeting in Devens. She advised that several attendees wished to make comments today and she introduced the first speaker.

Maureen Babcock, DEAC Chair and Member and a Devens resident for nineteen years, reminded everyone that MassDevelopment’s Board acts in place of a Board of Education for Devens students. She presented DEAC’s “Update to the MassDevelopment Board of Directors – October 2021,” a copy of which is attached and made a part of the minutes of this meeting. She noted that while this year’s annual survey was not typical, feedback was good and 38 responses were positive.

Ms. Babcock advised that all students have returned to class, in person, with testing for the virus, after an academic year of remote learning, and there have been no positive COVID cases since students returned to in-person learning. There were five high school graduates this year from Devens (all are pursuing higher education opportunities), and, once again, the Town of Harvard commemorated the achievement with a graduation parade. The students were also able to enjoy the Prom, albeit in a tent, outside, in the rain. Also, a new elementary school in Harvard opened in May 2021 and has been well received.

Ms. Babcock informed everyone that there are currently 90 Devens students (46 in elementary school and 44 in middle/high school) being educated under a contract with the Harvard Public Schools. This is the thirteenth year that Devens students have officially been attending Harvard’s Hildreth Elementary School (K – 5) and the fifteenth year Devens students have been attending Harvard’s Bromfield School (middle/high school), which recently ranked 8th out of 140+ schools in educational achievement in the Route 495 corridor. On behalf of the students and DEAC, Ms. Babcock thanked the Board and MassDevelopment for its continued support, as always.

Peter Lowitt, Director of the DEC, made comments next. He reminded everyone that the DEC oversees the development process in Devens, including permitting. He referred to his presentation, “Devens Project Updates – October 2020 to September 2021,” a copy of which is attached and made a part of the minutes of this meeting, highlighting numerous tenants/projects, including: KSP/Pathway – a new life science/biotech campus; Commonwealth Fusion Systems – building a reactor for fusion energy (as a result of successful rezoning); Bristol Myers Squibb – expansion of its biotech campus for an exciting new technology; Emerson Green – phased development of residential housing; the Devens drinking wells – successful elimination of PFAS and other chemicals; Little Leaf Farms – additional expansion/renovation. Mr. Lowitt said construction will get underway soon for projects at 16 Bulge Road and 41 Lake George Street. Finally, Clear Path for Veterans is retrofitting an old, military hospital for medical use(s) once again. Mr. Lowitt said Devens has been busy, indeed, and he thanked everyone for their time and the opportunity to speak today.

Melissa Feterhoff, President/CEO, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce, spoke briefly next. She confirmed that the Chamber has kept busy during the pandemic, among other things, hosting “Open for Business” events that have migrated from virtual discussions to in-person, in-office conversations, which involve Ms. Strunkin and MassDevelopment and offer opportunities for one on one discussions with businesses in the Commonwealth. Ms. Feterhoff was pleased to announce that Dan Rivera, MassDevelopment’s President and CEO, will be the guest speaker at the Chamber’s meeting on November 10, at the Hilton Garden Inn.

Next, Tracy Clark, a Devens resident for nine years and founder of MagneMotion on Barnum Road, thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak today. He mentioned a number of “top of mind” issues, including: Vicksburg Square – an important part of the Devens community and for which there is another anticipated rezoning attempt; COVID-19 – thanks to everyone involved in the local handling of and responses to the pandemic; new developments – exciting to see expansion at Bristol Myers Squibb and Little Leaf Farms, as well as construction at KSP/Pathway and CFS. Mr. Clark offered kudos for what he called the right kind of zoning. In addition, he said Emerson Green is taking shape and it is nice to see visible activity for a positive outcome at Clear Path for Veterans. He encouraged patrons to visit local establishments, stating it is helpful for the community, and he recommended Bandoleros Mexican Grill and Marty’s Café. Among perennial issues, Mr. Clark mentioned traffic, expressing concern as Devens continues to expand. He said the challenge is figuring out how to grow smoothly, and businesses and residents must learn to co-exist. He informed everyone that prior anxiety over PFAS contamination has been relieved by MassDevelopment’s response and mitigation efforts regarding water quality and superfund issues, more generally. With respect to future decisions related to jurisdiction over the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone, Mr. Clark noted the huge impact and uncertainties involved; he hopes to be a voice in the process and said he looks forward to it unfolding.

Mr. Clark then thanked MassDevelopment, particularly, Jessica Strunkin, for providing helpful overviews and interactive meetings; he said the weekly newsletters are wonderful. He thanked the DPW for its responsiveness to the many storms this year. He commented that both the Devens Fire and Police Departments are improving. He thanked Hillary Andrews in Recreation for coordinating the recent pumpkin festival, an earlier bike rodeo and a firefighters dinner, noting the Devens community loves such events!

Next, Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager of Ayer, made remarks about Ayer’s strong relationship with the Devens community and MassDevelopment, emphasizing the power of regionalization. He mentioned, in particular, recent regional vaccine clinics held in Devens. Mr. Pontbriand was pleased to see improvements in veterans’ services that are taking place. He thanked MassDevelopment for its assistance in obtaining a $3 million MassWorks grant for a project near Verbeck Gate, which he confirmed will commence shortly. He thanked Ms. Strunkin for navigating and coordinating the Devens Jurisdiction Framework Committee meetings, among many other things. Mr. Pontbriand concluded by saying he looks forward to the future of Devens, and Ayer is a willing partner.

The current commander in chief at Ft. Devens, Lt. Col. Trent Colestock, spoke next. Cmdr. Colestock arrived at Ft. Devens on July 1st and has spent much time in his first few months building relationships with the local community. He said the base is staffed with about 250 soldiers per week, and 245,000 soldiers passed through the main post in FY2021; he said all is well at Ft. Devens. He advised that the numbers of personnel and amounts of activity are returning to pre-COVID levels. Noting that Ft. Devens is known as the “premiere training center in New England,” he expressed appreciation of the local small businesses that support the transient soldiers who come through the base. In conclusion, he thanked Ms. Strunkin and MassDevelopment.

Ms. Strunkin then introduced Dona Neely, Executive Director of the Devens Eco-Efficiency Center – a non-profit organization established in 2005 with the mission of promoting and assisting with sustainability initiatives that help firms make more efficient use of the region’s material, human, economic, and environmental resources. Ms. Neely, who has been with the Center since its inception, praised 16 years of sustainable business practices and growth in Devens. Referring to the “Devens Eco-Efficiency Center’s 2021 Summary” and “2021 Highlights,” copies of which are attached and made a part of the minutes of this meeting, she advised of the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Center and its clients/customers. Ms. Neely stated that the Center has suspended its educational forum, while making upgrades during pandemic “down time.” She highlighted the Center’s “Great Exchange” program, providing an overview of contributions and inventory and noting the Center is grateful to be able to provide value to its customers and additional donations (such as toys, bedlinens, more) to those in need. In closing, Ms. Neely thanked MassDevelopment, as always, for its ongoing support.

Ms. McBee noted this is her first meeting and it is great to hear from everyone. She said there is a Town Meeting in Harvard this Saturday at noon.

Ms. Strunkin then invited Tyson Renoso, of King Street Properties, to make comments. Mr. Renoso introduced himself as a local life sciences developer/owner who is creating a new biomanufacturing campus in Devens; the first building at KSP/Pathway will be complete in the spring. He thanked MassDevelopment for being a “great partner” with respect to recent challenges involving the movement and transfer of top soil and obtaining expanded capacity for natural gas service. Mr. Renoso said it is exciting to be part of a “model” community that is “transparent, organized and pro-active” and he is glad to be part of the process.

Kristen Cullen, of Commonwealth Fusion Systems, spoke next, noting that CFS was founded in 2018 at MIT to develop clean power to combat climate change. In three short years, CFS has grown from 10 to 160 people and an extensive search for a home was undertaken. Calling attention to access to talent, proximity to MIT and Boston, ease of permitting, and affordable space, Ms. Cullen said it quickly became apparent that Devens provided a good fit. She noted that Mr. Renoso of KSP/Pathway is also assisting CFS with the development of its first phase and stated the project is moving forward quickly. She said it has been great working with the MassDevelopment team and others and called it a “real partnership.”

The floor was then opened to questions and/or additional comments from the attendees and Robert W. Gardiner, Jr., introduced himself as a Devens resident of more than 70 years and a prior Board member of the Agency. Mr. Gardiner echoed Mr. Clark’s sentiments regarding Vicksburg Square. Repeating that the current zoning for emerging technologies is problematic, he implored the group to make improvements before the property becomes unsalvageable. Mr. Gardiner commended MassDevelopment for doing a good job. There were no further comments.

In conclusion, Ms. Strunkin and the Board members present on the videoconference expressed gratitude to everyone for attending today’s meeting.

This meeting of the MassDevelopment Board of Directors adjourned at 11:35 a.m.