MASSACHUSETTS DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AGENCY

**Meeting of the Board of Directors**

**Thursday, October 11, 2018**

**11:00 a.m. (Devens Residents Session)**

**M I N U T E S**

DIRECTORS PRESENT: James Chisholm, Acting Chair

James Blake

Francesca Maltese (newly appointed)

Juan Carlos Morales

DIRECTORS ABSENT: Mark Attia, Designee for Secretary of Administration & Finance

Karen Courtney

Grace Fey

Mike Kennealy, Designee for Secretary of Housing & Economic Development

Brian Kavoogian

Christopher Vincze

Ellen Zane

Agency Staff: Lauren Liss, President & CEO

Robert Ruzzo, SEVP, Deputy Director

Simon Gerlin, Chief Financial Officer

Ricks Frazier, General Counsel and Secretary

Richard Henderson, EVP, Real Estate

Laura Canter, EVP, Finance Programs

Meg Delorier, Chief of Staff

Victoria Stratton, Recording Secretary

Dave Blazon

Mika Brewer

Sean Calnan

Rob Carley

Dena Kavanagh

John Marc-Aurele

William McKenzie

Kathy O’Connell

Ron Ostrowski

Doug Robinson

Ed Starzec

Ellen Torres

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

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

Kathy Benshimol, Devens resident

Tracy Clark, Devens resident; President, Devens Committee

Dix Davis, DEC

Peter Lowitt, DEC

Mike McGovern, Town Administrator, Town of Shirley

Dona Neely, Devens Eco-Efficiency Center

Lance and Margi Neilson, Devens residents

Victor Normand, Harvard resident

Lucy Wallace, Joint Boards of Selectmen

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 11:06 a.m.

The Acting Chair re-introduced himself and welcomed everyone to this information session and he thanked them for coming. There were about 40 people in attendance. He asked everyone present to please introduce themselves, and introductions were made around the room.

The Acting Chair introduced Ms. Liss, MassDevelopment’s President & CEO, who thanked everyone for attending today’s meeting. Before introducing today’s speakers, Ms. Liss immediately advised that the Agency is in the process of hiring a new Senior Vice President for Devens, the position vacated by Thatcher Kezer earlier this year. Staff has met with several groups (i.e., Devens residents, others) for their input regarding this important role, and Ms. Liss confirmed that a third round of interviews of viable candidates is underway.

Ms. Liss then advised that a traffic study of Auman Street has been completed and raw data has been received. Staff is currently interpreting and analyzing this raw data and will make recommendations soon to address traffic issues in this neighborhood.

Ms. Liss introduced Ms. Maureen Babcock, DEAC Chair and Member and a Devens resident for sixteen years. Ms. Babcock advised that MassDevelopment’s Board acts in lieu of a Board of Education for Devens students and she expressed gratefulness for the Board’s input and advice. Ms. Babcock provided copies of DEAC’s “Update to the MassDevelopment Board of Directors – October 2018,” a copy of which is attached and part of the minutes of this meeting, and she noted, as stated therein, that Devens currently has 83 students going to school under a contract with the Harvard Public Schools (41 students in elementary school; and 42 students in middle/high school). This is the tenth year that Devens has officially had students attending Harvard’s Hildreth Elementary School (K – 5) and the twelfth year that Devens students have been attending Harvard’s Bromfield School (middle/high school); Ms. Babcock stated that all the kids have “done great,” individually, and she was pleased to report that many of the graduates have gone on to matriculate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Bryn Mawr College, and other institutions of higher learning. She stated that eight years of surveys to the Devens community regarding education continue to confirm the overall view that Devens students are being well served; meanwhile, the DEAC continues to aim for better communication with the Devens community. In conclusion, on the behalf of the DEAC, Ms. Babcock thanked the Board of Directors and the Agency for continuing to support education for the students in Devens.

Ms. Liss then introduced Ms. Lucy Wallace, Chair of Harvard’s Board of Selectmen. Ms. Wallace thanked MassDevelopment and the Board for implementing the re-use plan for Devens and helping to bring to fruition the vision of the Devens community. She noted, however, that there is still much work to be done with respect to Chapter 498 before the 2033 deadline when the legislature must act, and she commented that people need to begin thinking about the transition. To this end, she advised that a nine person committee has been established to address the “what ifs” of the 2033 disposition / transition; she described the committee and noted that Mr. Normand, present today, is a member. She said she looks forward to working with everyone on this and other issues, including, how to reopen certain roads that were closed over the years by the Army. In addition, Ms. Wallace commented that the larger the Devens population becomes, the more “we” need a local government. Until a Senior Vice President for Devens is hired, she asked if there is/are Point of Contact name(s) within MassDevelopment, and Ms. Liss advised that Mr. Ruzzo is the Agency’s main Point of Contact for any Devens concerns and Mr. Starzec is also a very good resource.

Next, Ms. Liss introduced Mike McGovern, Town Administrator, Town of Shirley. Mr. McGovern informed everyone he has been Shirley’s Town Administrator only since July 2nd and it has been a great experience so far. He comes from Lowell and he knows Dave Blazon (in MassDevelopment’s DPW) and George Ramirez (MassDevelopment’s former SVP, Devens), and he said he looks forward to learning more about Devens and working with the community.

Ms. Liss then introduced Ms. Dona Neely, Executive Director of the Devens Eco-Efficiency Center – a non-profit organization established in 2008 with the mission of promoting and assisting with sustainability initiatives that help firms make more efficient use of material, human, economic, and environmental resources. The Center provides technical assistance, educational offerings, and other programs (such as waste reduction, environmental safety, and more) and organizes events such as blood drives, exchange programs, and emergency kit assembly programs; it has served more than 125 entities in 30 towns, and its successful “Great Exchange” program this year alone has repurposed more than 75,000 lbs. of materials. Ms. Neely said she is celebrating her tenth year with the Center, having been there since its inception.

Mr. Peter Lowitt, Director of the DEC, was then introduced by Ms. Liss. Mr. Lowitt described the DEC as the permitting and regulatory authority for Devens; its role is to administer and enforce the reuse plan, by-laws, regulations, and sustainability vision within the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone, and it functions as the community’s board of health, conservation commission, zoning board of appeals, historic district commission, and planning board. Mr. Lowitt provided copies of the “Devens Project Updates – October 2017 to September 2018,” a copy of which is attached and part of the minutes of this meeting, and he noted briefly the highlights of each project.

The floor was then opened to questions and/or additional comments from the attendees. Ms. Kathy Benshimol stated that she and her husband have been residents for about 3 years; they moved to Devens to enjoy peace in their retirement years. She commented that while Devens is a beautiful place to live, it has been a challenge. Ms. Benshimol then spoke about frustrations she shares with her Auman Street neighbors regarding traffic issues and noise from industrial vehicles, many with diesel engines that drive through the neighborhood. Her hope is to put a personal face on these issues so that people in authority do not forget about her and her neighbors “up on the hill” (i.e., living in the Auman Street neighborhood).

Noting that he shares Ms. Benshimol’s frustrations, Mr. Lance Neilson added that he and his wife have also experienced major truck traffic in the Auman Street neighborhood. He agreed that numerous tractor trailers cut through the neighborhood daily on their way to and from the various industries in Devens. He acknowledged that MassDevelopment has listened to concerns in this regard and he was thankful that some progress has been made; for instance, some signs have been added, but signs do not stop all the truck traffic. He said he has had a lot of contact with Neil Argus at the DEC and, together, they have been “chipping away” at the problem and continue trying to reach drivers that are not familiar with Devens. He was appreciative of the efforts made so far, but acknowledged there is more work to do.

To this, Mr. Marc-Aurele noted that the ground work has been laid, and staff is working toward finding a beneficial solution. Messrs. Blake and Chisholm thanked the audience for these helpful comments and for bringing this problem to the Board’s attention and for providing context. Ms. Liss advised that MassDevelopment expects to have something to share with residents in the next several weeks regarding the traffic issues.

In conclusion, the Acting Chair, Ms. Liss, Mr. Ruzzo, and the Board members present again expressed gratitude to everyone for attending the meeting today.

The meeting of the MassDevelopment Board of Directors adjourned at 11:56 a.m.