MASSACHUSETTS DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AGENCY

**Meeting of the Board of Directors**

**Thursday, October 12, 2017**

**(Devens Residents Session)**

**11:00 a.m.**

**M I N U T E S**

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Brian Kavoogian, Vice Chair

James Blake

James Chisholm

Karen Courtney

Patricia McGovern

Juan Carlos Morales

Christopher Vincze

DIRECTORS ABSENT: Jay Ash, Secretary of Housing & Economic Development, Chair

Grace Fey

Agency Staff: Lauren Liss, President & CEO

Simon Gerlin, Chief Financial Officer

Richard Henderson, EVP, Real Estate

Meg Delorier, Chief of Staff

Leigh Natola, Recording Secretary

Kelsey Abbruzzese

Kelly Arvidson

Dave Blazon

Mika Brewer

Rob Carley

Robin Churray

Dena Fazio Kavanagh

Zach Greene

Lisa Kalinowski

Thatcher Kezer

Fire Chief Joseph LeBlanc

RJ McGrail

Jim Moore

Kathy O’Connor

Ron Ostrowski

Meggie Quackenbush

Ed Starzec

Kim Walsh

Guests: Mark Andrews, Town Administrator, Pepperell

Neil Angus, Environmental Planner, Devens Enterprise Commission (“DEC”)

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

Pam Callahan, Public Safety Admin. Assistant, Shirley

Melissa Fetterhoff, President, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce

Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator, Shirley

Tom Kinch, Chairman, Devens Advisory Committee

Peter Lowitt, Director, DEC

William Marshall, Chairman, DEC

Charles McPhail, Lieutenant, Massachusetts State Police

Dona Neely, Devens Eco-Efficiency Center

Robert Pontbriand, Town Administrator, Ayer

Stephen Themelis, Former Selectman, Pepperell

Grant Welker, News Editor, Worcester Business Journal

Other Devens Residents and Members of the General Public

After a break, the meeting of the Board of Directors of Massachusetts Development Finance Agency (“MassDevelopment” or the “Agency”) resumed at 11:01 a.m.

Thatcher Kezer, Senior Vice President for Devens Operations, introduced himself and welcomed and thanked everyone for coming to this annual Board of Directors Meeting held in Devens. He stated members of the Board of Directors were given a ninety-minute tour between this morning’s meetings to give them a visual overview of Devens. He asked everyone present to please introduce themselves, and introductions were made around the room. There were about 40 people in attendance.

Mr. Kezer then introduced Ms. Liss, MassDevelopment’s newly appointed President & CEO, who thanked everyone for attending today’s meeting; she also thanked the Board of Directors for all that they do to support Devens and MassDevelopment. Ms. Liss expressed how fabulous it is to be here in her new capacity as President & CEO and to carry on the legacy of all the great work that MassDevelopment does. She describes herself as a lawyer by training and said she attended college in Pennsylvania and at Boston University School of Law. Concerning previous work experience, she has worked in law firms; on the “Big Dig”; and was the Commissioner of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection fifteen years ago. She then acknowledged and thanked MassDevelopment’s Devens staff for all their hard work and thanked those in attendance for having the Board out today.

Mr. Kezer then described how several stakeholders help make Devens such a success. Mr. Kezer introduced Mr. Peter Lowitt, Director of the DEC, who briefly described the DEC as the permitting and land use regulator for Devens. He stated that it is the DEC’s role 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 briefly presented project highlights, some of which include: 29 Saratoga Boulevard – Integra expansion is nearing completion of their 41,000 sq.ft. building expansion; 66-68 Saratoga Boulevard warehouse expansion is doubling its size by adding a new 429,173 sq.ft. building to the former Gillette warehouse and distribution facility; 85 Patton Road – Terra Vista Behavioral Health Center, which is a great story regarding both private and government sectors; 155 Jackson Road – Laddawn office & parking expansion includes an indoor state-of-the-art rock climbing wall; Jackson Road additional street tree plantings, which the DEC funded and Devens DPW installed, this also goes in line with the Devens Complete Streets Policy; and Route 2 Bridge Repairs have been completed by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

Mr. Lowitt closed by discussing the Devens shuttle bus. The DEC and MassDevelopment have partnered with Devens businesses, as well as the Towns of Ayer and Shirley to commence shuttle service in the Devens region, which is provided by the Montachusett Area Regional Transit (MART). He stated during the first week of operations at the end of April 2017 there were 24 riders and as of mid-September 2017 the ridership has increased to 87 riders per week. The bus will help to address workforce challenges and, in particular, provide transportation for workers to and from Devens and surrounding towns like Leominster and Fitchburg. In conclusion, Mr. Lowitt provided copies of the DEC’s current Project Updates, attached and part of the minutes of this meeting, which, he noted, gives a real sense of what’s happening in Devens.

Mr. Kezer then introduced Ms. Dona Neely, Executive Director of the Devens Eco-Efficiency Center (the “Center”) – a non-profit organization that helps business and non-profits by providing educational offerings and other programs (such as waste reduction, environmental safety, and more). She spoke about the Center’s mission – to promote and assist with sustainability initiatives that help firms make more efficient use of material, human, economic, and environmental resources, which she noted is a great added value to Devens businesses. Ms. Neely noted she has been with the Center for the last nine years. She then provided copies of the “2017 Summary for MassDevelopment” and an article entitled “Great Exchange turns trash into treasure,” attached and part of the minutes of this meeting.

Since the Center’s inception, it has delivered value to 96 industrial and commercial entities, non-profits, schools, and government organizations from 29 towns; thereby, reducing waste and operational costs to such entities and institutions. Ms. Neely noted this is the largest number in the Center’s history. Educational offerings have increased to 11 events per year that address important topics such as DEP regulations, OSHA inspections and preparing for emergencies and disasters.

Ms. Neely discussed The Great Exchange, a program that turns the trash of one business into the treasure of another. She explained how over 60 tons of materials will be repurposed and provide savings by eliminating the need for entities to dispose of or purchase office supplies, furniture, packing/shipping items, arts and crafts materials and more in 2017.

To conclude, Ms. Neely discussed a Community Harvest Project that was held in the Town of Harvard this past spring, which included two half-day volunteer opportunities to plant and prune fruit trees, package apples and peaches for distribution to area organizations that fight hunger in the fall. She said the response was very positive. The Center’s 10th Anniversary is next year, and she looks forward to coming back to share more great stories. Mr. Kezer remarked how amazed he is at how much one person is able to accomplish.

Mr. Kezer commented that one of Devens’ greatest assets are the residents. He next introduced Mr. Tom Kinch, Chair of the Devens Advisory Committee and a long-time resident of Devens. Mr. Kinch welcomed the Board Members to Devens and stated there is no place like Devens to live. He made note of the 450+ residents, 100+ children, 200 – 300 temporary residents, as well as military personnel whom typically train at Ft. Devens on the weekend. Mr. Kinch stated that “Devens” is nearly one hundred years old (the land comprising Devens was bought by the Army from local farmers in 1917). He was complimentary of Devens services, including the Fire Department, DPW, Engineering, and others. He said Devens has challenges like other cities and towns, but that it is easy for residents to work and talk with Mr. Kezer.

Touching on the most current-pressing issues affecting Devens, Mr. Kinch began by discussing how distressed Vicksburg Square is. Mr. Kinch stated something has to be done with Vicksburg Square, that he is not sure exactly what should be done, but he is aware that it is not properly zoned; he reiterated it is essential to rezone the area. He also stated Devens has all of the functions of a municipality, with the exception of clerical-type (e.g., voting in Devens, to obtain permits for firearms, etc.) residents would like to see that change, while noting this is a long-term situation that does not need immediate attention.

To conclude, Mr. Kinch discussed road safety. He talked about a private road being used by construction vehicles that should not be accessing such road. With respect to the Verbeck Gate, he stated the area gets very dark at night and suggested more lighting. He then talked about a residential street being used as a main thoroughfare because it is situated between residential areas and business areas. He said it was not suitable for this purpose. Mr. Kinch stated large trucks that shouldn’t be driving in the area still do, and also noted that employees of Devens businesses are often speeding through the area rather than obeying the posted speed limit. According to Mr. Kinch, road safety items require more immediate attention. This concluded Mr. Kinch’s discussion.

Next, Mr. Kezer said as a municipality and a community, the importance of education and the futures of the children that live in Devens are very important. He then introduced Ms. Maureen Babcock, DEAC Chair and Member and Devens resident. On behalf of all the members of the DEAC, Ms. Babcock thanked the Board of Directors and the Agency for continuing to support education for the students in Devens. Ms. Babcock provided copies of DEAC’s “Update to the MassDevelopment Board of Directors – October 2017,” and the “DEAC Newsletter, October 2017,” attached and part of the minutes of this meeting. She stated that the DEAC currently serves 49 elementary students and 47 middle and high school students who are educated under a contract with Harvard, which numbers are up nine students from last year. She noted that with new residential developments under construction, these numbers will increase. Ms. Babcock reminded the Board Members that the DEAC is in its third year of a current five-year contract.

Ms. Babcock was pleased to inform the Board that the Harvard Public School District was ranked 10th in Boston Magazine’s ranking of the Best Public School Districts in Boston 2017. She stated a survey of the Devens community regarding education was not undertaken this year, but will be prepared for next year’s residents meeting. Ms. Babcock described the World Technology Initiative in the Harvard School District and how the program was expanded this year to include MacBooks for each student in 8th – 12th grades, in addition to iPads for each student in 5th – 7th grades. Ms. Liss asked where the funding comes from for such initiative and Ms. Babcock stated Devens.

Ms. Babcock next described how the DEAC has partnered with new teachers from the Harvard School District, in a new initiative to introduce them to the Harvard and Devens communities. She reported how second grade social studies introduce students to the government unit of a “town,” and that their curriculum has expanded to cover both the Harvard and Devens communities. Ms. Babcock expressed how the Bromfield School lent instruments, podia and music stands to Devens to help with the 100th year concert of the 18th Army Band. To close, Ms. Babcock thanked the Agency’s Board of Directors for providing for an excellent education and great opportunities for the children of Devens, and referring to the DEAC Newsletter, told of several success stories of recent graduates from Devens who attended the Harvard Public Schools.

Next, Mr. Kezer introduced Ms. Melissa Fetterhoff of the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce who commented briefly about a new mobile application that was recently rolled out to help connect businesses with the community regarding events, job openings, etc. She stated it has been great working with Mr. Kezer and the whole MassDevelopment/Devens staff. Ms. Fetterhoff then told of the Nashoba Valley Town Administrators Working Group, which started two years ago. She stated Mr. Kezer had been meeting with local town administrators and businesses when Mr. Kezer came up with the idea to collaborate, and shortly thereafter, the working group was formed. Ms. Fetterhoff stressed how helpful the working group has been to all parties involved. She thanked the Agency and the Board of Directors for their support and assistance.

Mr. Kezer stated there are a number of town administrators in attendance at today’s meeting. He mentioned the importance of maintaining the key relationships with surrounding communities, since working together allows them to help solve each other’s problems.

Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator, Shirley, spoke briefly. She stated Shirley has roughly 5,300 residents, with a $5.3 million operating budget. She said she has significant challenges, however Shirley recently lost a 40-year DPW foreman and they needed help. Ms. Garvin had to call Mr. Kezer, as their DPW Department is so small, and ask Mr. Kezer if they could work together with Devens DPW, with hopes of possibly regionalizing after this winter and seeing if there are any opportunities.

Robert Pontbriand, Town Administrator, Ayer, noted how 1994 was a big transformation for Devens, he also made note of the 100 years that Ft. Devens had provided service and operations in the area. Mr. Pontbriand stated not only is Ayer alive and well, it is stronger than ever. He then proceeded by discussing how Ayer is the rail hub of the region, noting travelers from 26 communities travel to the Ayer Commuter Rail Station. With respect to transportation, Mr. Pontbriand noted upcoming improvements to the Ayer commuter rail platform, as well as the addition of forty-two new parking spaces. The regional shuttle has been significant in filling the regional transportation gap, too. He also stated it has been a very positive experience having veterans’ living in Devens. As far as the Verbeck Gate, Mr. Pontbriand stated they will work with Devens on the safety improvements. Regarding Vicksburg Square, Mr. Pontbriand said times have changed for the better on working on it.

Mark Andrews, Town Administrator, Pepperell, began by thanking the Agency for its recent approval of a LexVest Chapel LLC loan, as it will provide 350 area jobs. He then acknowledged all of the recent work regarding Gateway Cities, and asked why not gateway towns? Mr. Andrews stated how other towns supporting grant applications is critical. He also discussed how he worked with Mr. Kezer and sponsored certificate trainings at Devens, in order to keep workers safe and on the job. Mr. Andrews praised Mr. Kezer by stating how he has brought genuine added value not just to Devens, but to the surrounding communities, as well.

Mr. Kezer wrapped up by acknowledging staff and managers which represent running the Devens Community and getting the job done, no matter the challenges. He also thanked Ms. O’Connor for all that she does to keep things running so well.

Ms. McGovern thanked all of the speakers, while noting she will leave this meeting feeling very good and up not only about Devens, but also the surrounding cities and towns that have come together (i.e., the Town Administrators Working Group) like many other cities and towns do not do. She applauded this very positive story.

The floor was then opened to questions and/or additional comments from the attendees, and there were none. The Vice Chair, Ms. Liss, Mr. Kezer, and the Board members present again expressed gratitude to everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting of the MassDevelopment Board of Directors adjourned at 11:59 a.m.