MASSACHUSETTS DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AGENCY

**Meeting of the Board of Directors**

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

**Thursday, October 8, 2020**

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

**M I N U T E S**

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Mike Kennealy, Secretary of Housing & Economic Development, Chair

Brian Kavoogian, Vice Chair

James Blake

James Chisholm

Joan Corey

Francesca Maltese

Christopher Vincze

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

Juan Carlos Morales

Kristina Spillane

Ellen Zane

Agency Staff: Lauren Liss, President and CEO

Robert Ruzzo, Deputy Director and COO

Ricks Frazier, General Counsel and Secretary

Simon Gerlin, Chief Financial Officer

Jeff Fuhrer, SEVP and Chief Strategy Officer

Laura Canter, EVP, Finance Programs

Cassandra McKenzie, EVP, Real Estate

Jessica Strunkin, EVP, Devens

Meg Delorier, Chief of Staff

Victoria Stratton, Recording Secretary

Graeme Brown

Rob Carley

Karen Davis

Nick Giaquinto

Zach Greene

Roy Herzig

Dena Kavanagh

Tim Kelly

John Marc-Aurele

Jim Moore

Leigh Natola

Rick Pass

Kelsey Schiller

Bob Seega

Ed Starzec

Cyndy Tonucci

Shelly Testa

Matt Wamback

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

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

Tracy Clark, Devens resident; President, Devens Committee

Dix Davis, DEC

Melissa Federhoff, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce

Peter Lowitt, DEC

Mike McGovern, Town Administrator, Town of Shirley

Dona Neely, Devens Eco-Efficiency Center

Victor Normand, Harvard resident

Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager, Town of Ayer

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 11:03 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 – due to emergency procedures in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic (see Gov. Baker’s Declaration of a State of Emergency, dated March 10, 2020, and subsequent Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, dated March 12, 2020), pursuant to the Agency’s Remote Participation Policy. Access codes for general public use were included in the Public Notice for this meeting.*]

Noting the annual Board meeting in Devens is a highlight of the year, Ms. Liss welcomed everyone to Devens, virtually. She cited a recent UMass/Donahue Institute report calling Devens “an important economic engine” and she thanked the Towns of Harvard, Ayer and Shirley for their willingness to partner in this community endeavor. Further, the report states and Ms. Liss agreed, “Devens is for everyone! Not just businesses, but residents, as well.”

Ms. Liss introduced Ms. Strunkin, MassDevelopment’s Executive Vice President, Devens, and thanked her for her great work in the Devens community. Ms. Strunkin admitted it has been an interesting year and a half and she looks forward to whatever the future brings. Ms. Strunkin advised that several attendees wished to be heard and she introduced the first speaker.

Maureen Babcock, DEAC Chair and Member and a Devens resident for eighteen years, advised that MassDevelopment’s Board acts in place of a Board of Education for Devens students. She provided copies of DEAC’s “Update to the MassDevelopment Board of Directors – October 2020,” a copy of which is attached and part of the minutes of this meeting. She noted there were six high school graduates this year from Devens, and the Town of Harvard commemorated their achievement with a graduation parade in June and an in-person ceremony in July. The new elementary school under construction in Harvard is on track for occupancy in May 2021. Ms. Babcock advised that there are currently 86 Devens students (38 students in elementary school and 48 students in middle/high school) being educated under a contract with the Harvard Public Schools – currently, using a hybrid model where students attend class in person four mornings each week, with deep cleaning on Wednesdays. This is the twelfth year that Devens students have officially been attending Harvard’s Hildreth Elementary School (K – 5) and the fourteenth year Devens students have been attending Harvard’s Bromfield School (middle/high school), which recently ranked 6th in educational achievement among the 140 schools 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.

Next, Tracy Clark, a Devens resident and member of the Devens Advisory Committee, gave a shout-out to MassDevelopment for keeping services uninterrupted during this “most unusual” year. Mr. Clark was pleased that certain groups like the Devens Advisory Committee are continuing meetings virtually. He hopes to see the Devens Jurisdiction Framework Committee (“DJFC”) – which has paused its meetings for several months due to the pandemic – get back on track, and that a Super Town Meeting can consider zoning changes before the buildings in Vicksburg Square deteriorate beyond repair. He misses things like the annual Fire Department dinner and he looks forward to meetings in person. He said there had been widespread interest and public involvement in the Devens Forward Climate Action Plan and he was pleased to see a wide cross section of viewpoints. He noted the Plan is enjoying favorable reviews and he asked for updates going forward. He also asked that the UMass/Donahue Institute’s Devens Economic Report be shared. He said the traffic study last year produced quantitative, useful data, and he thanked MassDevelopment for spearheading the effort. In closing, Mr. Clark thanked the Agency for its handling of the PFAS/wells situation, which he noted is a “big deal for Devens’ residents and businesses.”

Peter Lowitt, Director of the DEC, was then introduced by Ms. Strunkin. Mr. Lowitt reminded everyone that the DEC is 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. He presented a report on “Devens Project Updates – October 2019 to September 2020,” a copy of which is attached and part of the minutes of this meeting, and he recapped briefly highlights of certain projects, including: progress on Grant Road by Emerson Green; development of a self-therapy facility at Bristol Myers Squibb; the further expansion of Little Leaf Farms; completion of construction at Shirley Meadows offering 55 units of affordable senior housing; the expansion of Bio-Techne Diagnostics at 7 Jackson Road; and others. He commented favorably on the amount of effort that went into the Devens Forward Climate Action Plan over the past year, and he thanked Ms. Strunkin and MassDevelopment for their collaboration.

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 15 years of sustainable business practices and growth in Devens. Referring to the “Devens Eco-Efficiency Center’s 2020 Summary” and “2020 Highlights,” copies of which is attached and part of the minutes of this meeting, she advised that the Center had closed from mid-March through August and all in-person training was paused. Changes have been made and the Center was able to transition to a remote/virtual platform and has begun rescuing items from local businesses that have closed. In closing, Ms. Neely thanked MassDevelopment for its ongoing support.

Next, Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager of Ayer, thanked MassDevelopment for ten years of collaboration in connection with veterans’ services. He said he is a member of the DJFC and looks forward to future meetings and discussions regarding Vicksburg Square. He thanked Ms. Strunkin for always being proactive, accessible, helpful, noting he appreciates her leadership. He also expressed appreciation to the partnership on street scape plans that has led to proposed zoning which will enable Ayer to acquire property near Verbeck Gate.

Orlando Paccheco of Lancaster spoke next, noting that Lancaster is not usually involved in these annual meetings, but that he felt it is important to participate. He commented on the robust spirit of cooperation among the stakeholders, regardless of Devens’ military history. He cited clear, open lines of communication, and he said he appreciates working with others to leverage opportunities.

Next, Ms. Strunkin introduced Mike McGovern, Town Administrator of Shirley. Mr. McGovern echoed Mr. Paccheco’s sentiments. He said he has been Shirley’s Town Manager for two-and-a-half years and he appreciates the ease of the working relationship with Devens. As others have already stated, Mr. McGovern looks forward to revitalizing in-person meetings of the DJFC.

Melissa Feterhoff, President/CEO, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce, spoke next. She confirmed that the Chamber has been very busy during the pandemic, mostly hosting virtual events, such as “Open for Business” events, which involve Ms. Strunkin and MassDevelopment and offer opportunities for one on one discussions with businesses in the Commonwealth. Mr. Feterhoff was grateful for the partnership.

Jack Wilson and Tom Sommer, Fort Devens Museum, spoke about various programs offered by/at the Museum, including: updated artifacts collections; free guest speakers (at well-attended Saturday events once a month); reenactment weekends (which draw as many as 1,000 to 1,500 people during non-pandemic times); making conference rooms available to others. Messrs. Wilson and Sommer advised of increased artifact donations to the Museum, noting that people are home and cleaning out attics and basements, etc. They informed everyone that the Museum – currently located in space provided free of charge by the Agency on the top floor of 94 Jackson Road – is out of room and the purpose of their presence today is to solicit the Agency to consider allowing the Museum to use two empty offices adjacent to the Museum space in return for a space or desk at local meetings held in the Museum with the communities.

The floor was then opened to questions and/or additional comments from the attendees, and there were none. In conclusion, the Chair, Ms. Liss, Ms. Strunkin, and the Board members present on the videoconference again expressed gratitude to everyone for attending today’s meeting.

This meeting of the MassDevelopment Board of Directors adjourned at 12:14 p.m.