

FOR DRAFT MINUTES
Board of Selectmen
Ayer Town Hall – Great Hall
January 31, 2006 @ 7:00 p.m.

Present: Faye Morrison, Chairman; Cornelius Sullivan, Vice Chair; Pauline Conley, Clerk; Paul Bresnahan, Member; Frank Maxant, Member. Staff: Shaun Suhoski, Town Administrator.

Meeting called to order in Open Session at 7:05 p.m. by Chairman Morrison.

MOTION: Selectman Bresnahan moved to approve sending the draft letter of support requested by the Harvard Board of Selectmen for the “Hummingbird” project to Governor Romney.

Second: Selectman Sullivan. After discussion the **MOTION PASSED 3-2** (Maxant; Conley).

Chairman Morrison then introduced Mr. Bresnahan and Mr. Suhoski who presented the Devens Disposition Executive Board’s disposition proposal to the public. Mr. Bresnahan focused upon the formal DDEB request, and Mr. Suhoski outlined the proposal’s impacts on the North Post of Ayer. After the presentations, the Chair opened the meeting to the floor for question and comment. The following speakers addressed the topic:

Bill Oelfke: Mr. Oelfke questioned the difference between “jurisdiction” vs. “ownership.” Mr. Bresnahan explained the difference and noted that taxes generated would be paid to the town of Ayer. Mr. Oelfke asked whether the redevelopment would be subject to Devens Enterprise Commission rules, or Ayer Planning Board rules. He stated his preference that development be built to Ayer specifications versus Devens specifications. Mr. Oelfke asked why the town couldn’t have jurisdiction “without caveats.” Mr. Sullivan said it was a result of bargaining.

Laurie Nehring: Ms. Nehring said she was there to speak in favor of mixed-use on behalf of PACE and others. She suggested the town strive for “clean industries” such as a wind farm or institutional use, but “no Wal-Mart.” She asked and suggested there be: a commitment to upgrades of MacPherson Road; an affordability plan for the housing; treatment of water from MacPherson Well; and completion of environmental cleanup. Ms. Nehring said that any transfers of property should include notification to new owners of the environmental status of the parcel(s).

Elizabeth Bodurtha: Ms. Bodurtha asked about the types of business that would go to the airfield. Bill Burke of MassDevelopment responded that the agency would work with the town on type of business. Ms. Bodurtha expressed concern over the type of housing, its affordability and whether any elderly housing was included. She asked about jurisdiction over Willard Field.

Larry Keenan: Mr. Keenan, Ayer’s representative to the DDEB Finance Committee, commented on the status of the financial model, and the projections of economic impact he provided for the North Post. He stated that the existing projections are based upon actual 2003 budget numbers, but that the numbers will still be “fine-tuned.”

Ed Kelley: Mr. Kelley read a lengthy statement concerning the outcomes of the disposition process. He stated a concern over what entity would have control over zoning and said there should be no North Post development until MacPherson Road is completed, and any remaining environmental contamination is cleaned by the Army. He asked if jurisdiction changed before the redevelopment, would there be any tax revenue to the town.

Patrick Hughes: Mr. Hughes, an Ayer representative to the DDEB Land Use and Open Space Committee, said that in a consensus-based disposition, compromise was inevitable. He favored the mixed-use approach and pointed out that all parties in Ayer are “united” on the need for the MacPherson Road improvements. He indicated that compromise was warranted due to the MassDev commitment of millions of dollars.

Martha Craft: Ms. Craft said that housing was not preferred at North Post. She asked about the formula for affordable housing. Rich Montuori, of MassDevelopment, said that the state Dept. of Housing & Community Development guidelines would apply. Ms. Craft also asked about boundary adjustments along Barnum Road and whether voters would be offered a “choice” in November. She said there have been a lot of promises and said the town needs to get everything in writing.

Faye Morrison: Stated that an access road into Harvard should be required.

Patricia Walsh: Ms. Walsh, an Ayer representative to the DDEB, questioned jurisdiction over the former airfield, stating that Ayer bought the land in the 1940s before giving it back to the federal government in the 1950s. She felt Ayer should receive “special consideration” for the North Post and suggested the town investigate the old deeds to the property. She also recommended a traffic study to include Groton-Shirley Road.

Rick Gilles: Mr. Gilles said the town needs to get a “net gain,” and that it was clear under the proposal. He suggested housing that more people can afford, and said utilizing the North Post provided “expansion room” for the community. He said mixed-use was in the best interest of the town and that he “strongly” supports Scenario 2B.

Dennis Curran: Mr. Curran questioned where Harvard’s housing would be, saying the issue speaks to the larger interest of affordable housing, except in Harvard. He questioned the “fundamental rationale” for creating a new town vs. reversion. He called for the MacPherson Road upgrade and suggested including commuter rail in the disposition plan.

Lora Haines: Ms. Hanes spoke in favor of mixed-use. She also said that Ayer currently needs more senior housing, and that there is enough market-rate housing. She said the town needs more affordable housing.

David McCoy: Mr. McCoy asked questions concerning zoning and commercial uses, including whether an airport was allowed. Selectman Conley read a portion of the zoning for the district, indicating that an airport was an allowed use under the current Devens zoning. Mr. McCoy stated his opposition to an airport at the site.

Richard Harrison: Mr. Harrison said Ayer is “land-starved” and that he prefers reclaiming all land. He said it appears all work to date has been slanted to Option 2 and that he has seen no study to date on Option 1. He said he requires more information.

David Bodurtha: Mr. Bodurtha questioned whether there would be a fee charged to Ayer residents for use of fields at Devens (answer: yes, same fee as Devens residents). Suggested the town ask for Bishop Road and Park Street intersection improvements when MacPherson is done. He questioned where undeveloped land will “go” after 20-years (answer: MassDevelopment still controls disposal).

Carolyn McCreary: Ms. McCreary said care should be taken to protect a high yield aquifer that underlies the North Post. She suggested looking for a new wellhead now and protecting the Zone 1 and Zone 2 that surround it.

Chairman Morrison called for any further comment from the public. Hearing none, she opened discussion to the Board.

Selectman Maxant read a letter from Pauline Hamel into the record. The letter stated, in part, that the MacPherson Road upgrade needs to be done and that it bears no relation to the disposition scenarios.

Mr. Maxant said the disposition issue was "profoundly important" to the town and that there should be a "public hearing" on the matter.

MOTION: Selectman Maxant moved to treat the APAC recording and other records of the meeting as public hearing documents. Second: Selectman Conley. **MOTION PASSED**: Unanimous.

Selectman Maxant queried about the method of "vote" by the stakeholders. Selectman Bresnahan then recounted the stakeholder working group, Coordinating Committee and DDEB full board action. Mr. Maxant asked about the future of Army-owned land at the airport. Mr. Burke replied that it would remain until relocation to a site on Barnum Road. Mr. Maxant said he supports all commercial-industrial use to offset residential growth, and because manufacturing uses will have less traffic impacts.

Selectman Sullivan asked that a better disposition map be made available and posted for public viewing. He questioned whether there was any difference under Scenario 1 or 2 for the town of Shirley. Mr. Sullivan stated that the public wants to know the future financial viability

Selectman Conley encouraged everyone to get a copy of the original Reuse Plan and then read selected excerpts from same. She expressed concern over the time of the public hearings called for in the disposition timeline. She stated details for public hearings under Chapter 498 and recommended incorporating such public hearings before April 6. Ms. Conley stated she was not in support of housing at North Post.

Selectman Bresnahan had no further comment.

Selectman Sullivan called for a show of hands for mixed-use vs. commercial-only, yielding what appeared to be an even split.

MOTION: There being no further comment, Selectman Sullivan moved to adjourn the meeting. Second: Selectman Conley. **MOTION PASSED**: Unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

SIGN-IN SHEET

**Board of Selectmen – Public Meeting
Devens Disposition Proposal
January 31, 2006 @ 7:05 p.m.**

NAME

ADDRESS

**DO YOU WISH
TO SPEAK?**

| NAME | APPLICATION | EMAIL PHONE |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
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| Ruth Rhonemus | " " " | 772-5890 |
| Mary Spinner | Ayer | 978-772-5911 |
| Rocky Rmick | Ayer | 978 772-5328 |
| Marsha L. Craft | Ayer | 978-772-5657 |
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