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**Draft Questions for Candidates for Governor:**

The fate of the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone (the area of the Former Fort Devens created by M.G.L Chapter 498 of the Acts of 1993) will likely be an issue during your term of office.

A bill to raise the Commercial Development Cap of 8.5 million square feet to 12 million square feet is entangled in the Economic Development Bond bill and is likely to result in the cap being exceeded toward the end of this year, or early in 2023. For more information see the following:

[https://devensec.com/meetings/Approaching the cap 2.pdf](https://devensec.com/meetings/Approaching%20the%20cap%202.pdf)

Devens is a huge economic driver for north central Massachusetts, with over 7000 jobs and many more on the way as the recent spate of life science manufacturing construction continues apace. There are over 111 companies at Devens with an average annual wage of over \$90,000, Devens contributes over 4 billion to the Massachusetts economy, and Devens is home to Commonwealth Fusion Systems, New England Studios, Bristol Myers-Squibb, and King Street developers Pathways Life Science manufacturing campus, to name but a few of our corporate tenants. For more information see  
<https://www.massdevelopment.com/assets/pdfs/Devens-Economic-Profile-and-Contribution-062020.pdf>.

The host communities of Ayer, Harvard and Shirley have been meeting with the Devens Enterprise Commission, representatives of Devens residents and business, and MassDevelopment Devens to develop an approach to make recommendations to the legislature on the final disposition of Devens as required by Chapter 498 of the Acts of 1993. MassDevelopment recently withdrew from this process.

As the new Governor you appoint the Secretary of the Executive Office of Economic Development who chair the MassDevelopment Board. We would politely request that your new Cabinet Secretary direct MassDevelopment to re-engage in the disposition process. A contact person in your administration who could keep the communities and engaged parties informed on this issue would be greatly appreciated.

Devens residents have taxation without representation, and this will likely not end until the disposition process is resolved. (They vote in the underlying towns, but their taxes go to MassDevelopment to fund Devens operations as set forth in Chapter 498 of the Acts of 1993).

Unlike any other community in the Commonwealth, Devens has a housing cap, limiting residential dwelling units to 282. This number came about in 1993 when folks were justifiably concerned that the over 10,000 dwelling units at Devens would come into the marketplace and undermine their investment in their own property. Today there is an Executive Order to create more housing in the Commonwealth and a housing cap remains in place at Devens. This is likely to remain a thorny and politically fraught issue, with iconic historic buildings crumbling from disuse rather than being rezoned for housing. Rezoning requires a concurrent tri-town meeting and all three towns agreeing to the rezoning to move forward with addressing this issue.

The disposition of Devens is a complex and thorny issue with a wealth of options ranging from returning to prior boundaries to creating a new town and points in between. A recommendation is due the legislature by 2033 but coming to consensus on a solution will require an investment in time and funds to thoroughly assess all the questions and answers needed for the three communities and Devens residents to reach an informed opinion on how to proceed.

*DEC bullet points:*

*Devens is a statewide model for unified and expedited permitting. MGL Chapter 43D is based loosely on the Devens model. All development within the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone is as of right. All projects must be permitted within 75 days of the submission of a complete application. The Devens Enterprise Commission operates the unified permitting system and averages fifty-six days (56) +/- to permit projects. (Bristol Myers-Squibb \$1.25Billion campus received its initial permits within 36 days). We ask that the unified permitting system be maintained after the disposition process.*

*The Devens Enterprise Commission is comprised of six regional representatives appointed by the Governor and two local representatives from each of the host communities of Ayer, Harvard and Shirley who are nominated by their Select Boards and ratified by the Governor's Office. The DEC respectfully requests that your appointment office act expeditiously on nominations when they come before your office.*

*Harvard bullet points:*

*For the meeting itself, your suggestion at last week's meeting that each stakeholder prepare information bullets points from their perspective would also be helpful as take away from the meeting.*

*Here's what I would speak to at the meeting:*

*Harvard Bullets*

- *The residents of Harvard are interested in knowing the full impact of resuming political jurisdiction over its historic town boundaries as evidenced by the approval of a ballot question in 2017.*
- *Of the three towns, Harvard is potentially the most fiscally impacted by development at Devens should voters ultimately approve the resumption of political jurisdiction (75% of current commercial development and 85% residential development are in Harvard)*

- *Harvard provides public education services to Devens children under an existing contract with MassDevelopment*
- *The Harvard Select Board is committed to the DJFC and strongly concur that MassDevelopment should rejoin the effort and support funding for required consultant services*

*Presenting each stakeholder's perspective would give the candidates a feel for the complexity and importance of the work of the DJFC. This is an opportunity we should not miss.*