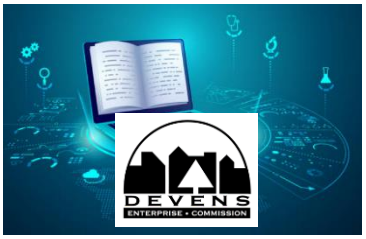

DEC VIRTUAL READ FILE
November 19, 2024

DEVENS IN THE NEWS:
Massachusetts Municipal Association "The Beacon" Newsletter – November 2024 (page 22):
https://www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/MMA-Beacon-November-2024.pdf

Around the Commonwealth

Devens

New guidelines seek to reduce 'embodied carbon'

Devens, a regional enterprise zone and former military base, has spent the past two decades redeveloping with sustainability in mind, while undergoing extensive remediation work to deal with soil and groundwater contamination due to military operations.

To promote environmental responsibility and sustainability, the Devens Enterprise Commission late last year adopted new embodied carbon reduction guidelines as part of its unified permitting process. (Embodied carbon refers to the carbon dioxide emissions associated with building materials throughout their lifecycle, from extraction to demolition and disposal.)

The Fort Devens Army Installation closed in 1996, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency named it a Superfund Site. Following the base's closure, the surrounding communities of Ayer, Shirley, Lancaster and Harvard considered what they wanted the site to become. Devens now has more than 120 businesses with more than 10,000 employees.

"People wanted to see it redeveloped in a more responsible manner," said Devens Enterprise Commission Director Neil Angus. "The whole sustainable redevelopment mission for Devens came from its history of contamination."

The mission had been incorporated into regulations surrounding Devens' redevelopment as an eco-industrial park, with businesses working together as a system. Angus compared the redevelopment of the site to a natural ecosystem, where one element feeds off another.

"We take that natural, ecological element and bring it into the industrial park and have businesses working together as a system of industries, where they can maximize efficiencies, minimize waste," Angus said. "One firm's waste is another firm's raw material resource."

The commission created the Devens Eco-Efficiency Center, which provides educational forums, technical assistance, networking venues, and partnership opportunities to help firms protect resources.

"It's a very unique program to Devens," Angus said. "It helps connect all these businesses together."

Devens had developed a number of regulations, policies and guidelines over the years to address sustainability issues like noise and light pollution, resource management and conservation.

The new guidelines intend to reduce Devens' embodied carbon footprint and will help the state meet its decarbonization goals. The Enterprise Commission gives an embodied carbon reduction checklist to each permit applicant early in the process, and applicants respond to each item, indicating their ability to incorporate them into their project.

"The earlier we get them, the easier it is to integrate these measures into their design," Angus said.

The commission worked in consultation with the Sustainable Performance Institute to identify incentives for green approaches to development, and the Carbon Leadership Forum provided a number of resources.

Angus said the guidelines have received mostly positive reviews, and Devens now has the potential to have its first all-electric commercial building.

"The first project we had, I was pleasantly surprised when they submitted the checklist and saw that yes, they are considering embodied carbon in all of their building products and materials," Angus said.

He said the owner was initially considering extending a natural gas line to the building, at significant cost, but was able to use the green building checklist to reduce energy consumption and avoid the need for gas.

Angus said the focus of the sustainability initiatives is to inform, educate, incentivize and then regulate. The new carbon guidelines might become regulations at some point in time.

A key part of the process is helping applicants see the significant savings potential, as well as the environmental components. One of the biggest challenges, Angus said, is getting applicants to think beyond their "first costs" to long-term or operational costs.

Angus noted Cambridge and Boston as cities doing work related to embodied carbon, in part to meet climate action plan goals.

"All these measures that are incorporated to reduce carbon end up producing more resilient buildings that are stronger, able to withstand longer power outages and more frequent and intense storms that are coming with climate change," Angus said.

"Our mindset is to show [developers] how this is going to benefit them as well — not just our goals, but how it's going to meet their goals."

– *Meredith Gabrilska*

New Bedford

City and region have new roadmap to address homelessness

In late September, New Bedford Mayor John Mitchell released a report about a city-commissioned study that analyzed New Bedford's response to homelessness, recognizing the city's achievements while providing recommendations for improvement and the development of best practices.

Consulting firm Technical Assistance Collaborative, which conducted the study, grouped its recommendations into four areas: Diversify Housing and Services, Use Policy Levers to Maximize Housing Resources, Invest in the Service Provider Network, and Strengthen Continuum of Care Governance.

"Homelessness is a complex and ever-evolving challenge," the mayor said in a prepared statement, "and we need to constantly strive to update and improve our approach to helping those who experience it."

Mitchell said the report "validates many of our current practices, but also offers valuable new strategies that will enable us to raise our game, so that our fellow residents can have a better chance to get their lives back on track."

■ COMMONWEALTH *continued on 24*

Worcester Telegram – November 16th

Economic development package sent to Healey

Michael P. Norton, Sam Doran
State House News Service

BOSTON .Gov. Maura Healey on Thursday received an even larger economic development package than the one she filed in March. The House and Senate both accepted a conference committee report (H 5100) that emerged Tuesday night recommending $3.96 billion in long-term borrowing, with $500million for life sciences and $400 million for climate technology.

The House voted 137-8 to accept the compromise bill, with Republican Reps. Nick Boldyga, David DeCoste, John Marsi, Joseph McKenna, Norman

Orrall, Kelly Pease, Alyson Sullivan-Almeida and Steven Xiarhoscast dissenting votes. The Senate accepted the report on a voice vote. The House then voted 139-4 to enact the bill.

After rejecting a Republican-led attempt to reopen the bill for further amendments, the Senate approved the measure 39-1.Republican Sen. Ryan Fattman of Sutton cast the lone no vote.

The life sciences initiative continues a commitment that started under Gov. Deval Patrick and kept going under Gov. Charlie Baker. The bill adds health equity, biosecurity, digital health and artificial intelligence to the mission of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center and raises the annual tax credit authorization for the life sciences industry from $30 million to $40 million.

Healey launched this year's economic development debate March 1when she filed a $3.5 billion economic development bill (H 4459).The branches in June and July advanced their versions of the governor's bill but couldn't wrap up work on it by the July 31 end of formal sessions, necessitating the rare postelection formal sessions that are set to unfold Thursday.

The compromise bill's bottom line reflects multiyear borrowing authorizations and adds to the menu of borrowing options already on the books and available to the executive branch. Healey's five-year capital plan totals $14 billion, with $242 million allocated for the Executive Office of Economic Development in fiscal 2024, and$1.2 billion for the office over the full five years.

As the Senate awaited the bill's arrival from the House early Thursday afternoon, Sen. Barry Finegold - one of the lead conferees who worked on the final product - said everyone should feel "comfortable" with the amount of bonding authorizations contained in the package. The Andover Democrat said he was assured of the measure's affordability by Healey's budget office.

"One of the first questions I did ask (Administration and Finance) when we were doing this bill was, Can we afford it? Because it is a real concern about how much we are borrowing at the state. They assured me we could. They also assured me that our bond rating would not be affected negatively by doing this. And understand that, with most bonding, it's all authorization. So they do have the ability that if things get murky, they can pull back," he said.

Sen. Sal DiDomenico praised both the inclusion of investments in the life sciences industry - his mother was an ALS patient who benefited from new treatments - and the pathway for a new pro soccer stadium in Everett.

"Surprise, surprise, I'm going to talk about a soccer stadium right now. We have been working on this issue for almost two and a half years, with the Senate president standing by our side throughout that entire process," DiDo-menico said.

DiDomenico said the proposed Kraft/New England Revolution project on the Mystic River waterfront would help clean up an area "where heavy industry has found a home for so long." The Everett Democrat called it "a new day for us." Sen. Michael Brady of Brockton celebrated the inclusion of up to $2 million in borrowing authorization for the development of a "tunnel program" honoring abolitionist Frederick Douglass in the areas of Boston, Brockton, and New Bedford to "create connectivity to places of public significance and the underground railroad." Both Brady and Sen. Walter Timilty of Milton said they were excited to see project labor agreement language included in

the end result. The bill would authorize municipalities and other government entities to enter into PLAs, which often call for only union labor on projects.
PLAs will "create, obviously, stability and peace with our construction around the commonwealth," Timilty said, "with municipalities and our building trades, and obviously we'll allow our building trades and our cities and towns to flourish in such a way that will spur on economic development."

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https://www.harvardpress.com/News/Breaking-News/from-limits-to-growth-devens-housing-cap-lifted-in-4-billion-bill

From limits to growth: Devens housing cap lifted in $4 billion bill

BY JOHN OSBORN · FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2024

After months of negotiation, the Massachusetts House and Senate, meeting in special session Thursday, Nov. 14, passed and sent to Gov. Maura Healey the $4 billion, 319-page “Mass Leads” economic development bill she proposed in February, including its provisions for increased housing in Devens.

Of special interest to the residents of Devens and the towns of Ayer, Harvard, and Shirley are sections 272 and 298 of the measure (H5100). Section 272 amends Chapter 498, the law that created Devens, to eliminate its cap on commercial or industrial development within the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone, as well as the cap on the number of residential units that can be built there.

The housing cap at Devens, as outlined in Chapter 498, is currently 282 residential units. The cap has been a constraint in the area’s development, limiting the number of homes that can be built. Eliminating the housing cap will pave the way for construction of hundreds of additional homes and apartments.

Recommending how many and what kinds of units should be built and where they should be located will be the job of a working group that the secretaries at the offices of Economic Development and of Housing and Liveable Communities are required to convene within the next 30 days.

The working group’s mandate is to come up with a strategy and plan for all of Devens, without making changes to the area’s zoning bylaws and building regulations. Some areas of Devens are already zoned for residential use, such as Adams Circle and Grant Road. But one area, Vicksburg Square, is not. Among its tasks, the working group is must consider the feasibility of building up to 400 multifamily residential units there, an area that is currently an Innovation and Technology District.

The working group, as specified in Section 298 of the bill, must include representatives from the towns of Ayer, Harvard, and Shirley; the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency (MassDevelopment); the Devens Committee, which represents Devens residents; and the Devens Enterprise Commission, the area’s permitting and regulatory agency.

The EOED and EOHLC secretaries must deliver the working group’s report to the House and Senate no later than six months after the bill is signed by the governor.

The bill passed the House of Representatives by a 139-4 vote. The Senate passed the bill 39-1. Harvard’s Sen. Jamie Eldridge and Rep. Dan Sena both voted for the measure. It now awaits Gov. Healey’s signature to become law.

Editors Note: This is a developing story and will be updated as additional information becomes available. Watch for our complete coverage of the bill and its impact in the Nov. 22 issue of the Harvard Press.