



“Foolin’ around again”

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Priceless



The new bridge over Route 2 can be seen from as far away as Leominster and Acton. (Courtesy photo)

## Plans unveiled for Route 2 bridge

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation unveiled exciting—and somewhat controversial—new plans this week for Harvard’s Ayer Road bridge over Route 2. Despite earlier reports that the work would be a simple matter of repairing the two outer lanes, state engineers have reconsidered and are hard at work planning a whole new bridge fit for a “crucial connector in an upscale town.”

“We already had a nice, clean design that worked well in an earlier project,” said Howell U. Fundit, chief engineer for the DOT’s artisanal bridge division. As always, cost was a factor, but Fundit’s crew has located enough material in the transfer station’s scrap metal pile to form the distinctive framework.

While striking, the design has sparked criticism for its visual impact and scale.

Eastbound travelers will be able to see the superstructure from Leominster, while those heading west will get their first glimpse somewhere in Acton. That might seem a little over the top for this obscure section of the Route 2 corridor, but many area residents see clear benefits.

“I can never remember that exit number when I’m giving directions to my house,” said one woman from North Harvard. “Now I can just say, ‘You’ll know it when you see it.’” And one daily commuter confessed that he is so tired coming home from Boston every night that he sometimes dozes off and has missed the exit more than once. “I think if I can see it from Acton, there’s less chance of that,” he said.

If all goes well, the bridge is now scheduled to reopen in late 2016.

## Devens aims to annex most of Harvard

Citing compelling archaeological evidence that Harvard’s earliest residents were settlers near the Nashua River in an area now known as Devens, residents of the former Army base are set to claim much of the town as their own. They argue that Devens’ claim to Harvard predates Harvard’s claim to Devens, and that Harvard’s town government has become so dysfunctional that a takeover is inevitable. As evidence, they point to the complete transformation of Devens in little more than a decade, while Harvard has all it can do to fix its iconic Town Hall.

The addition of North Harvard, Harvard Center, and especially the area around Bare Hill Pond would provide Devens with much-needed upscale housing and some very nice orchards, in addition to full control of an excellent, if somewhat remote, school system.

Harvard residents were stunned when Devens officials announced their intentions last week. Townspeople had long assumed that the shoe would be on the

other foot, with Harvard eventually taking control of vast areas of Devens. But Harvardites have dithered for years over the issue, conducting an endless series of feasibility studies resulting in mind-numbing reports that seemed to go nowhere. Although townspeople have consistently said they want the issue settled soon, a solution remained elusive.

Meanwhile, activists on Devens have been busily making plans and cutting a few deals to build regional support for their effort. The new town of Devens will allow current Harvard residents to decide whether they want to be fully integrated, or would prefer to maintain some semblance of independent identity, much as Still River now has in relation to Harvard. It is expected that North Harvard will have an easier time making the transition than will residents south of Route 2, although there may be small pockets of intense resistance. Almost immediately after the Devens announcement, Shaker Village announced its secession from North Harvard.



## Town offices could move to Ayer Road bowling alley

Ending weeks of intense speculation, inside sources revealed this week that the Harvard Bowling Lanes on Ayer Road will almost certainly become temporary Town Hall if the proposed Town Hall renovation project is approved at Annual Town Meeting. “The location is great, there’s plenty of parking, it’s a highly visible, friendly place,” said the source, who declined to be identified until lease negotiations are finalized. The facility’s open floor plan is an added plus, and its proximity to Dunkin’ Donuts, the post office, and nearby pizza shops is just icing on the cake.

As the word leaked out, many residents were thrilled that town offices wouldn’t be relocated to unsightly trailers or even to any of the seemingly more suitable vacant space in Harvard’s commercial district. Bowling enthusiasts were particularly

pleased at the prospect of bowling a few strings while paying their taxes, or getting their dog licenses. It seems like a good deal for the bowling alley, they said, because the lanes are not often busy during the day on weekdays, when town offices are open. And it’s good for Town Hall employees, who could work on their games during coffee and meal breaks, and perhaps work off some tension as well.

In fact, some speculate that everyone would like the new arrangement so much that they wouldn’t want to move back to Town Hall when renovations are finished. But then, maybe the upper Town Hall could be converted to a bowling alley.

In case lease negotiations fail, the tent recently erected on the new elevated parking area at the town beach could be used (see article, page A-2).



Harvard Lanes, the site of many fun-filled birthday parties, might be the new home of town offices. (Courtesy photo)