

JOINT BOARDS OF SELECTMEN
AYER - HARVARD - LANCASTER - SHIRLEY

MISSION STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Joint Boards of Selectmen recognize that Fort Devens was an integral part of the social and economic fabric of our communities. Despite this loss, we recognize this as an era of opportunity for all of us. There is a history of successful base closures which can serve as a foundation from which our communities can learn and build upon.

1. LOCAL CONTROL

A. As stipulated in the Report on Planning Civilian Reuse of Former Military Bases by the President's Economic Adjustment Committee, "The ultimate responsibility for determining the final base reuses rests clearly with the community leadership alone".

B. Fort Devens was created by the Acts and Resolves of Massachusetts of 1921 (Chapter 456) "in the Townships of Shirley and Ayer, County of Middlesex and the Townships of Lancaster and Harvard, County of Worcester", and as such when removed from military reservation status, local zoning and by-law regulations of each community shall prevail in determining use.

2. COOPERATION

A. We are working with four very diverse communities. Each will be called upon to sacrifice self-interest to guarantee a comprehensive, coordinated solution.

B. Each community recognizes and values the cultural differences and shall strive to incorporate each community's character and identity into any reuse plan.

C. The reuse of Fort Devens will affect the lives of every resident in our communities. It is an issue so complex and with such far reaching implications that the Boards of Selectmen cannot be solely responsible for developing a reuse strategy. We strongly encourage and welcome grassroots input.

D. Even though the four communities are charged with the responsibility for re-use, we recognize that responsibility extends beyond our four communities and input from our neighbors is necessary.

E. The responsibility for determining base reuse rests clearly with the community leadership. We recognize that our resources and expertise may not be sufficient, in and of themselves, to develop and implement an effective reuse plan. Therefore, we will make the maximum use of resources available through all agencies. We will strive to work with the Commonwealth's Land Bank and other public and private agencies so as to utilize their expertise in attaining our objectives.

F. Any successful reuse plan is predicated on the communities ability to influence decisions made by the Department of Defense relative to the release of property on terms most favorable to our long-term interests. We will work with the Department of Defense in order to prevent "cherry picking" or a "checker board" effect which would preclude more substantial uses of the property, both immediate and long term.

3. FOCUS

A. The success of prior base closings has been predicated on a comprehensive long term approach to the entire property encompassing the military reservation and we will utilize this approach.

B. Due to complex long term approaches and community diversity we will ensure continuity and consistency in our approach.

C. We recognize that there are certain members of our communities who will experience an immediate and severe economic dislocation. We are committed to making every effort to mitigate those impacts while not jeopardizing the long term benefits.

D. We further recognize that this is an evolving process which requires constant review and possible revisions of this mission statement.

4. USE

A. Ultimate success will depend on a proper determination of highest and best use of all the Fort Devens property. Highest and best use has been defined as "that use, from among the reasonably probable and legal alternative uses, found to be physically possible, appropriately supported, and financially feasible, and which results in the highest land value." It is implicit within this definition that the specific uses recognizes its contribution to the community environment and to the community development goals.

B. We have learned from our current predicament that reliance upon a single enterprise can have disastrous consequences. A diversified and predominantly civilian economy will ensure the future viability of this area. Multi-use must be a main component of any reuse plan.

C. Devens has been part of our community for over 70 years. While adjustment to civilian use is one of our goals, we welcome and encourage a continued presence of DOD organizations.

C. In order to facilitate an expeditious reversion of the property we do not oppose "piecemeal" release of surplus property by the Department of Defense as long as that property is free of contaminants.

D. Potentially conflicting uses within the development plan shall have suitable buffer zones, to the extent possible, so as to protect all interests.

E. Overlapping re-use activities, that are compatible, serve to meet the overall objectives.

F. One of the key considerations in re-use planning is that of transportation. Current infrastructures support some types of re-use and preclude others. Consideration must be given to issues associated with all aspects and all modes of transportation.

5. ECONOMICS

A. Employment is a paramount concern. The early stages of reuse will target labor intensive enterprises. Uses with significant secondary or spin-off demands for service should also be emphasized.

B. We seek selectively higher skill industries with gradually rising technology levels (and higher wage rates). Employment must have growth potential and raise the per capita income level for the region.

6. MUNICIPAL SERVICES

A. We recognize that once the military reservation status is lifted, the communities will be responsible for providing full municipal services to the area formerly under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense.

B. In particular a clear understanding must be met on the required services for the remaining federal uses of the base.

C. Our communities will experience an immediate and dramatic increase in the demand for municipal services. Any prospective use of the property must be assessed in relation to an immediate demand on the current level of service, as well as the long-term requirements.

D. The reuse plan will address any consideration for separate and sufficient municipal services (i.e. fire, police, ambulance, roadways, water, sewer, etc.)

E. Each of the communities involved rely on wells for our entire water supply. We support those reuse efforts which are protective of the underlying aquifer systems.

F. Solid waste disposal is an ever increasing issue, both on our natural and financial resources. Re-use development must recognize this issue and be supportive of our efforts for reduction in regional waste.

G. Over 90,000 retirees have come to rely on services from the Fort. We will actively work for the continuation of as many of these services as possible.

7. EDUCATION

A. Quality Education is of paramount concern. Students from Fort Devens attend local schools. Changing the status of Fort Devens from a military reservation will have a significant impact on the school systems of the communities.

B. Education will be impacted differently from other services.

8. ENVIRONMENT

A. We recognize the unique and valuable natural resources found within the region. Future open space for scenic, natural resources, or recreational purposes is an integral part of our overall objectives. As such, we insist that all Federal, State and Local environmental laws must be strictly adhered to.

B. Successful reuse planning is contingent on the complete and total cleanup of all the hazardous waste sites. It is the responsibility of the Federal Government to ensure these individual sites are returned to their natural state. As stated in 4c we support the "piecemeal" release of only uncontaminated sites.

C. Natural resources, including wetlands, rivers, aquifers, soils and wildlife, are interconnected systems knowing no town borders. Development activities in one town can have dramatic impact on a neighboring town. Therefore, effective natural resource protection within reuse planning can only be achieved through the multi-town cooperation.

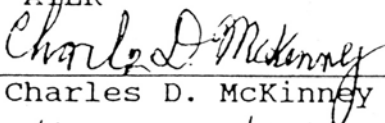
D. We acknowledge that re-use growth will take place within the region. However, it is important that this growth be directed away from environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands and critical wildlife habitat areas.


9.HISTORIC AND COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

A. The area is rich in historical heritage, including many National Register Landmarks. These sites are a tangible link to our past and provide a sense of identity for our future. These historic treasures must be preserved for future generations.

B. The reuse plan must preserve elements which contribute to the character of "community", with multi-land uses, based on strong rural and historic roots. A community is one where residential, commercial, industrial and personal enjoyment can coexist in harmony.

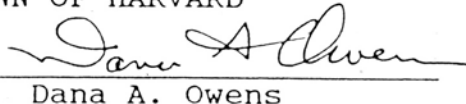
TOWN OF AYER

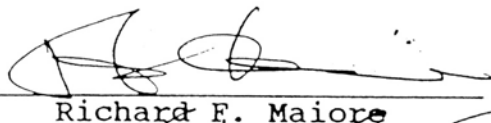

Charles D. McKinney

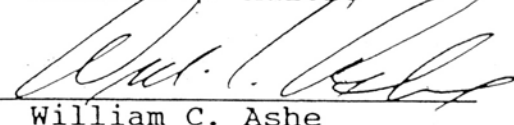

Steven M. Slarsky


Charles H. Jones

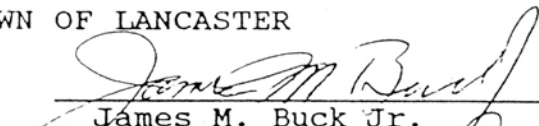
TOWN OF HARVARD

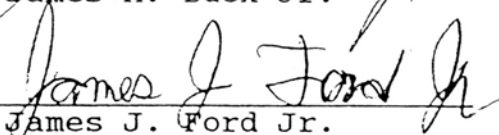

Dana A. Owens


Richard F. Maiore


William C. Ashe

TOWN OF LANCASTER

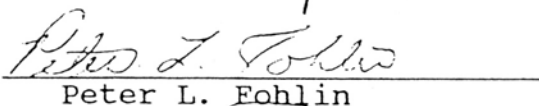

James M. Buck Jr.

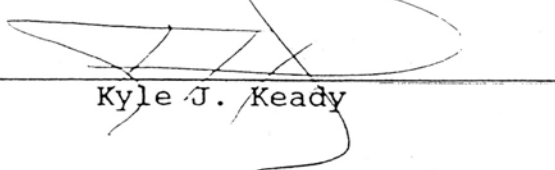

James J. Ford Jr.


Peter A. O'Malley

TOWN OF SHIRLEY


Lee M. Guercio


Peter L. Fohlin


Kyle J. Keady