

Untitled

From: fmaxant@aol.com
To: BlairLeoF@hotmail.com
Cc: PJHamel@Verizon.net
Sent: Tue, 9 Jun 2009 6:55 pm
Subject: UMassLowell/V'burg Square
Hello, Leo,

Pauline Hamel, JBOS Steering Committee, "91 - "93-ish, asks me to request time at Thursday's JBOS meeting (6/11) to suggest inviting her fellow UMassLowell alum. Marty Meehan to consider Vicksburg Square. Even after Doubletree, he needs more student housing. VS is closer to campus than the Nashua hotel to & from which he's been schlepping ~400 students by bus. VS has classrooms & lecture halls, to which he could send instructors, instead of moving so many students. VS seems almost a natural site for his nanotechnology center, centrally located w/rail just waiting for student traffic from UMassLowell, UMassWorcester, F'burg State, Worcester Poly, & w/colleges on our Enterprise Zone now, ready to collaborate.

Could this be our opportunity for JBOS to carpe diem and initiate a plan consistent w/our Devens Reuse Plan for VS which a broad base of interests would support?

I just realized, as a JBOS founder & alumna, Pauline will probably take special pleasure in speaking w/our new JBOS!
She's scheduling to be there Thurs.
Thank you!

Frank

From: Leo Blair <blairleo@hotmail.com>
To: fmaxant@aol.com
Cc: Richard Montuori <rmontuori@massdevelopment.com>
Sent: Wed, 10 Jun 2009 9:52 a.m.
Subject: RE: UMassLowell/V'burg Square
Hi Frank,

I would recommend that Ms. Hamel contact MassDevelopment if she has some interest in the Vicksburg Square area. As you know the JBOS has no jurisdiction over the use of any of the buildings within the DREZ.

I should also point out that housing is not a permitted use within Vicksburg Square, which is in the Innovation and Technology zone (please see the 1994 Reuse Plan). So it would require the passage of a zoning change affirmed by the three towns to allow this use. I trust the irony of this is not lost on you.

Largely due to your efforts the opportunity to actually accomplish something with Vicksburg Square has been lost.

Leo F. Blair

From: fmaxant@aol.com
To: blairleo@hotmail.com
Cc: rmontuori@massdevelopment.com, PJHamel@Verizon.net, >CLIP<
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2009 6:31:36 PM GMT -05:00 US/Canada Eastern
Subject: Re: UMassLowell/V'burg Square

Are you saying, Leo, that the combined chief executive officers of the Devens Host Communities are completely lacking in capacity to suggest uses of our assets on our Enterprise Zone? What is the role of JBOS, then, other than to react to MaD staff's Boston-inspired initiatives?

As Ayer voters told our selectmen at Super Town Meeting, it is your responsibility to promote (y)our towns' interests.

To JBOS: Chief Executive Officers of the Devens Host Communities, Get up off
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your backs, damnit!! Start living up to your responsibilities to advocate for YOUR constituents' interests!

Frank

P.S.: Your planning board will tell you that educational uses are permitted in any zoning district. Rick Montouri will tell you that, too, since he mentioned MaD is looking at Willard Field (zoned open space) for a school complex.

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From: Mary Leonhardt <maryleonhardt@gmail.com>
To: fayjasann@comcast.net
Cc: fmaxant@aol.com; rmontouri@massdevelopment.com; >CLIP<
Sent: Wed, 10 Jun 2009 9:33 pm
Subject: Re: UMass Lowell/V'burg Square
Hello, Devens area folks,
Thank you, Frank, for copying me on this correspondence.

My husband and I own a house at Devens, which we are currently renting because we couldn't sell it when we decided we could no longer bear to live under MD jurisdiction. I'm a real estate agent now, and have been simply floored at this VS plan. Here are some concerns:

Devens itself and the surrounding towns are already awash in unsold two bedroom condos. And the affordables! Hasn't anyone been following the mortgage melt down? I have a client now who is trying to sell her affordable unit for 25,000 less than she paid for it, and can't, because neither she nor the town she lives in can find buyers who are both income qualified for an affordable unit, and can also qualify for a mortgage. What will probably happen is that after 120 days she will be able to sell to anyone, and her town will lost the ability to count hers as an affordable unit. Check out what's happening with affordable housing at Newburyport: http://www.newburyportnews.com/punews/local_story_086220303.html

So--lousy joke on the towns--instead of having VS help them meet the ten percent, VS will hurt them because many or most of the "affordables" could go for market rate, and just add to the overall housing numbers.

Of course, I don't even think a developer will have much luck selling the units at market rate. No condo at all has sold at Devens since the summer of 2006--three years ago--and there have been four or five on the market, sometimes repeatedly, since then. And these are gorgeous, big condos for very reasonable prices.

So I'm really glad the zoning change didn't pass, and I think Frank's idea of college use might be just the thing, at least for now. They look like college buildings anyway. What grown-ups would want to live in them? If you're willing to live all squished together in huge buildings, you might as well move to Boston or New York, where all the amenities help make up for the crowding. I take around many buyers, and not one has ever said: "I'm looking for a huge building to live in, with other people all around me, with no little yard for gardening or anything, and that's not walking distance to anything but a gas station, a donut shop, and a hotel."

Lastly, I do think everyone has valid points, and would encourage a continuing dialogue. Maybe we shouldn't take as a given that the VS buildings need to be saved. Maybe we should be talking about how to get the historic designation changed or dropped.

Mary Leonhardt

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From: (Rich) <pjhamel@verizon.net> To: 'Mary Leonhardt' <maryleonhardt@gmail.com>; fayjasann@comcast.net

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Cc: fmaxant@aol.com; rmontuori@massdevelopment.com; >CLIP<
Sent: Wed, 10 Jun 2009 10:28 pm
Subject: RE: UMassLowell/V'burg Square

Hello All,

Just a quick observation from a completely disinterested party.

Frank.... I understand your passion about this and other issues but the insulting comments go beyond the pale.

Jim and Leo.... It is fairly obvious that your comments stem from "sour grapes" . Discourse should always be welcomed, even if you disagree with what is said. For you to refuse to offer Ms. Hamel time at the JBOS meeting to present her idea is a deplorable act of childishness.

All three of you need to grow up and behave like adults.

Richard Hamel

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From: glenngarber@comcast.net

To: Jeff Mayes <me@jeffreymayes.com>

Cc: FMaxant@aol.com; blairleof@hotmail.com; rmontuori@massdevelopment.com; PJHamel@Verizon.net >CLIP<

Sent: Thu, 11 Jun 2009 11:28 am

Subject: UMassLowell/V'burg Sq. --some history (Garber)

TO ALL--The college/institutional idea has been discussed many times in the past, going back to the original base reuse planning days in 1993-94. It has actually been explored in some detail and limited marketing efforts occurred in the 1990's. There are two practical impediments to establishing this use:

- 1) States just aren't building (or redeveloping) whole university campuses anymore, even in good times, and certainly not in bad times. Small satellite branches occasionally, but nothing beyond that scale. Private institutional expansions are even rarer these days. Most university systems are built-out for the moment, at least until the next era of planned expansion
- 2) The rehabilitation/adaptive reuse costs are exceptionally high in these buildings.
- 3) Even if a university campus moved in tomorrow, the traffic problem would be considerable throughout the day and evening. Students (both commuter and resident), staff, faculty & visitors generate a lot of auto trips in a suburban location, more than many other mixed use scenarios.

I personally think that a campus or institutional user would be a desirable use, but it's just not going to happen.

Respectfully,
Glenn Garber

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From: Bacon, George <George.Bacon@mwra.state.ma.us>

To: Pauline <pjhamel@verizon.net>; Mary Leonhardt <maryleonhardt@gmail.com>; fayjasann@comcast.net

Cc: fmaxant@aol.com; rmontuori@massdevelopment.com; >CLIP<

Sent: Thu, 11 Jun 2009 11:55 am

Subject: RE: UMassLowell/V'burg Square

I understand the disappointment of the project's proponents, but they should not feel like the opportunity has been lost. JBOS and MA Dev should not throw up their hands and walk away from VS now. The message that should be taken from Ayer town meeting is not "Don't save VS" or even "Don't change the zoning". The message is that the plan as presented had some serious weaknesses that the voters felt were fatal flaws, and the presenters did not have the right answers to those concerns.

Having been on the losing side of several (of what I consider important) town meeting votes, including the redevelopment of the Pleasant Street School, I think you now have a better opportunity to craft an acceptable plan. You have the voters attention, and you've heard their concerns. My recommendation is to engage the

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public while they are still interested to get their input before creating a new plan.

The Historical Commission's mistake in the first attempt to redevelop the school was not to involve the voters from the beginning. We sought proposals, selected one, refined the plan, and then brought for public discussion. That was defeated. The successful route was to involve the interested citizens from the outset and give them a seat at the table as the plan developed.

If MA Dev wants to get past the voters in Ayer, they have to manage it, not as a Devens issue, but as an Ayer issue, because that's how the voters in Ayer look at it. Bring the discussion to Ayer. Don't expect them to come to MA Dev or JBOS meetings.

Also, the issue of the impact of this project on home sales and affordable housing in the current economic climate is important, but it should not be driving this issue. I believe the housing market was in a slump when the reuse plan was adopted, which was the driving force behind the 282 unit cap. The market did recover (and more), and it will recover again. Let us not be too short sighted in our planning.

George Bacon

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From: Jeffrey Mayes <jmayes@ayer.ma.us>
To: Bacon, George <George.Bacon@mwra.state.ma.us>
Cc: Pauline <pjhamel@verizon.net>; Mary Leonhardt >CLIP<
Sent: Thu, 11 Jun 2009 5:09 pm
Subject: Re: UMassLowell/V'burg Square

George,
Thanks for providing additional input on the Pleasant Street School project. I was one of those citizens that had a seat at the table after the first attempt failed. While it was a much smaller project/issue, I think it's a great example of what can be accomplished if you use the right process. Also thanks for the level headed and clear input you have provided in general.

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From: Jeff Mayes <me@jeffreymayes.com>
Subject: Re: UMassLowell/V'burg Square
To:
Cc: FFMaxant@aol.com, blairleof@hotmail.com, >CLIP<
Date: Thursday, June 11, 2009, 10:34 AM

To have what was purposed to us from Mass Development on Monday night is no where close to the idea of having UMass (or any other institution of higher learning) have classroom and student housing. While I would not give any school carte blanche to do what they want with V'burg Square, I would definitely be interested in having them as a neighbor of Ayer. So the 'irony' that was pointed out in a previous email from Mr. Blair was lost on me as housing for students is not what was proposed at Monday's town meeting.

If Mass Development is having trouble (for whatever reason) with the Innovation and Technology zone initiative, presenting only one other option in the form of housing is not the way to move the process forward. I'm also not saying that student housing is the way to go, I'm simply saying that any reasonable option should be explored.

My first involvement as a citizen of Ayer was on the Pleasant Street School Re-use Committee. We explored every option that came to the table (daycare center, YM/WCA, community center, just to name a few) As many of you included in this email know, we not only found a solution that satisfied the neighborhood but also benefited the entire community as well.

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What we learned with the Pleasant Street School was, it was better to see who (from a developer standpoint) was interested in doing something with the school. The committee then picked the project it like the best. A very preliminary project plan was put together (where the funds would/may come from, partnering organizations, etc). Then we took that to town meeting with the necessary articles to get the project going.

With Devens, Mass Development want's to do all encompassing zoning changes that we the citizens then would have no control over what happens. Instead, Mass Development should be advertising the square and see who has the vision and the funds to do something with it. Then take the best options and present them for feedback. Once they know which option the people want, they can put forth articles in town meeting (if need be) to move the project forward. I think Mass Development would find much less resistance if they used that approach and not the strong are tactics they have been using.

As for the JBOS not having jurisdiction, that may be true, but they are suppose to represent their constituents and therefor advice Mass Development as to what we (the constituents) want or at least what we are interested in.

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From: philipcrosby@yahoo.com [mailto:philipcrosby@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2009 6:08 PM
To: Jeff Mayes
Cc: FFMaxant@aol.com; blairleof@hotmail.com; rmontuori@massdevelopment.com; >CLIP<
Subject: Re: My thoughts after the vote
Jeff,

The work done regarding adding zoning to increase options for a developer was precisely to gather a range of proposals for consideration. The rezoning was also stimulated by recent apparent solid inquiries regarding Vicksburg square. Seems to me that NO developer will come forward or spent one penny unless they feel they have a chance for success. To ask a developer to spend their money on the HOPE that three towns will then review their proposal and then support it is ludicrous to me. The zoning must be in place to get developers to act.

I had high hopes that a broad range of proposal would have resulted from the second RFP with new zoning in place that would have resulted in a speed and appropriate restoration of the Square.

The JBOS did not ask MassD to spend considerable time and money to prepare for new zoning on a whim. It was clear to all members of the JBOS that the best restoration of Vicksburg Square could only occur by allowing a developer the option of housing. I am open to school use of Vicksburg Square but as much as everyone wants to deny what appears to me obvious is that rental properties here on Devens to serve the needs of a growing employee population is desirable.

Vicksburg Square is the heart of Devens, these buildings must be restored and soon. We wait patiently here as Devens residents but folks enough is enough. We still have the real problem of Vicksburg Square but now we really don't have any working capital, monetary or human remaining to do anything about it. Kind of like the last monkey-wrench really just 't blew up everything. We really do not have a future, we really don't have mechanism, we really don't have hope that citizens in Shirley, Ayer, Harvard and Devens can reach consensus on anything in Devens. Maybe it is time to cut Devens loose as a separate community and let us plan and develop or community.

Phillip Crosby
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From: Richard <hamel960@verizon.net>

Untitled

To: phillipcrosby@yahoo.com; 'Jeff Mayes' me@jeffreymayes.com
Cc: >CLIP<
Sent: Fri, Jun 12, 2009 12:33 am
Subject: RE: My thoughts after the vote

Phillip,

I understand your frustration but come to a completely different conclusion. This concept of yours to change the zoning to allow anything and let's see which developers come forward is just crazy! That kind of thinking will give us results similar to Walker's Groton Residences project.

Maybe it's time to return the land to its parent communities and end this fiasco once and for all.

Richard