



**Revenue Ideation Committee Minutes**  
**December 14, 2021**  
**4:00pm**

**The Select Board Regular Meeting was held virtually in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L.c.30A. S.20.**

**Revenue Ideation Committee participants:**

Members Present: Jane Biering, Dan Daly, Paul Green, Kara McG. Minar, Charles Oliver, Bob O'Shea, SusanMary Redinger .

After brief introduction of members, the committee reviewed the charge of the RIC which aims to look into creative/innovative ideas to generate new revenue for the town without increasing taxes on residents.

Biering asked question about the charge regarding "working with state representatives to improve state aid and to develop a home rule petition (preferably with other communities) to not assign the commercial tax rate to farms." Minar noted that town does not have a split rate tax rate where commercial and residential properties are taxed at differently because the town did not want farms to pay higher commercial rate. The RIC would look into developing a Home Rule Petition to continue to permit farms to be taxed at residential rate while instituting a commercial tax rate for general business activity.

Leasing municipal land for solar power generation was discussed. Redinger noted that new school building had to reach out to state reps to ensure that National Grid would permit HES' upload of electricity onto the grid because NG had very little capacity for adding electricity. Redinger also noted that NG would need to accept additional electricity from other potential town sources in the future.

Leasing of cell towers on town land was discussed. Minar noted that Isotrope was hired by town to review suitable locations which included the area behind Hildreth House and at the water tower on Bolton Road. Isotrope had estimated that cell tower on town land would generate approximately \$40,000 per year.

Securing corporate sponsorship for the athletic fields was discussed. O'Shea mentioned that HYBSA has some advertising in place on town fields. O'Shea noted that it was a lot of legwork for volunteers to secure sponsorships and if they did that, they would want to keep the money for the athletic programs and not hand it over to the town. Minar questioned how much could be generated by adding sponsorships to fields because cost would likely be a few hundred dollars per sponsorship so it would not generate significant town revenues.

Minar asked members what their ideas are for generating revenue. O'Shea offered that his top idea would be to put a water and sewer line down Ayer Rd in order for commercial enterprises to develop. O'Shea also suggested that when DPW takes trees down, the DPW should sell it. O'Shea also offered that a subscription for public wi-fi at the beach and potentially in the broader downtown area could be sold as a service by the town. O'Shea said the key for revenue is operational services based on what requests are seen on NDH—like plowing, leaf pickup etc. O'Shea wondered if DPW could offer some of these services for a fee. O'Shea also noted that Town Hall could offer a service where "town hall process wizards" could help citizens navigate permit processes in town for a fee.

Charles Oliver wanted to get inventory of town-owned land that is leased out for agricultural purposes. He said FinCom asked ConCom what they collected for farmed land a few years ago but they were not able to give a full accounting of the rents that were charged but seemed quite low. Echoing a proposal from Dan Daly, Oliver said he wanted to increase excise tax for personal property particularly for cars that exceeded a certain value such as a luxury car. To help meet State CO2 goals, Oliver noted the town could give a full exemption to those with electric vehicles. Oliver noted it would help meet our revenue and environmental goals. Daly noted that this would also requires a Home Rule Petition to enact.

Dan Daly stated there's a difference between "one-off" revenue opportunities and ongoing revenue opportunities and that focus should be on sustained revenue growth opportunities. Since Prop 2 ½, towns are either charging for existing services or creating new services to generate revenue. Daly noted that grant money is critical.

Biering asked how good is the town at collecting property taxes? Is the town getting what it is supposed to get? Minar said she would ask Bragan about the town's compliance rate and what the process is for collecting outstanding taxes, liens and seizing delinquent properties. Biering proposed there may be some more event possibilities such as festivals. Minar asked if we could generate more revenue through using our natural resources such as what O'Shea has done by renting snowshoes at a kiosk at the pond and by supporting more opportunities for agritourism.

Minar wondered if conservation lands could harvest timber to generate revenue, support forest health and reduce fire hazards. She also noted that Martha's Vineyard has a Land Bank Commission which charges a percentage on home sales and the funds are used to maintain conservation land and buy new parcels.

Paul Green agreed with Charles Oliver that we were looking for big ideas. Green suggested that we look to other government agencies because when an agreement is reached with a government entity for funding, it tends to be long-lasting. Green said we need to lobby our state reps on making sensible changes to how taxes and fees are assessed. Green said building up infrastructure, like Ayer Rd sewer line, is key and one of the ways to do that is through faster permitting as MassDev does on Devens. Green is concerned that tapping into local businesses to do corporate sponsorships is not reliable because businesses are cyclical and leadership changes so sponsorships may not be consistent. Green does not feel this would be a long term plan. Green also noted Devens future will be decided in a few short years and if the town resumes jurisdiction, the ratio of commercial to residential properties will resemble many other well-endowed communities. Green said he would look into the research he had done previously on the DEAT modeling the economic activity that Harvard would have if its historic lands on Devens were taken back. Minar noted that looking at Devens may be outside the current parameters of this committee, especially since there is the HDJC looking into these issues. Green said we could work with MassDev to build a new road to connect Devens and Harvard for example that could lead to new growth.

Redinger wanted to echo the grants opportunity because it is bringing revenue into the town, although it can be only a 1x free money opportunity, and we should look into more grant opportunities. Redinger said that increasing the resident population would significantly increase revenue and decrease burden on those already here. She was interested in finding ways to generate revenue through people who don't live here through "selling its services" i.e its rural places, schools and find ways to leverage those resources. For example, a new athletic facility could charge for access. She said we should research what other towns have done to generate new revenues.

Minar asked how members felt about the structure of the committee—should the committee break into groups to do research? Daly said to look at other reports that have been done, as Green mentioned, to see what benchmarks there are before we decide on a structure. Daly noted we have not discussed impact fees and he is familiar with some towns that have implemented them.

Minar asked about taking the RIC charge of seven bullet points and dividing it up among members to research. Daly said he would look into delinquent properties and is interested in looking into what other towns have done. Redinger noted that looking into surplus town buildings—ie Old Library, Bromfield House and Hildreth House, is likely the purview of the Select Board. Redinger said that she would look into leasing of town land for solar generation as the HEAC rep. Biering suggested all RIC members to do some research on what other ideas may be out there. Oliver agreed to research what other towns have done. Minar said she would look into Land Bank Commissions and would look into the Home Rule petition for the tax rate. Green said he would look into the potential for Mass Development to share some costs of projects that the Harvard was doing. Bob O'Shea and Paul Green agreed to look into the cost of sewer

and water lines on Ayer Road. Minar said she would look into the potential opportunity to harvest timber from our conservation lands. O'Shea asked about the insurance costs to rent town properties and whether that is prohibitive for the town to generate revenue by renting space out such as in town hall. O'Shea said he would look into this policy and whether it is actually needed. Biering would like to get a top level look at our revenue sources—ie fees, services etc. Redinger said that Finance Dir Jared Mullane would have it. Minar offered to track that down and also asked if an AirBNB tax should also be considered because although the administration of the tax would fall to property owners, the tax itself would be paid by visitors. The Committee agreed to a calendar for future meetings and adjourned.