

Revenue Ideation Committee  
April, 14, 4pm  
Minutes

Members Attending: Kara Minar, Paul Green, Jane Biering, Charles Oliver (left at 4:32pm), SusanMary Redinger, Bob O'Shea (joined approx. 4:40pm)

Kara called the meeting to order at 4:03pm

Charles Oliver moved to approve the minutes of 3/8/22. SusanMary Redinger seconded.  
Approved 4/0/1

Paul Green updated on Solar options on municipal roofs/property based on David Fay's comments at a recent HEAC meeting.

- Public safety building too small
- Bromfield School – recommend canopies over the parking lot (expensive infrastructure)
- New Senior Center – “this building is begging to have solar on it”
- Gravel Quarry pit. Three phase power at the street is a long distance from the power site at the street and would require poles.

The question of a substation remains – which one and is there capacity?

Charles is awaiting a purchased array from Solar Sunbug and expects to have that in another week or so. It would be good to have the two options side by side (lease vs. own).

Harvard/Solect were initially told the substation couldn't handle it, but then pressure was applied to National Grid and they approved. The reason behind their ultimate acceptance is unknown.

Jane Biering reminded members that Concord had a transfer fee in the legislation (with monies going into their AHTF (Affordable Housing Trust Fund)). Takeaways from her research:

- Concord is far from the only town that has a bill like this pending. Several others requesting some sort of transfer fee for affordable housing. Most notable one is Boston.
- There is also a bill that would allow all towns/cities (Senate Bill #868) to do this. 868 would allow towns to set their rates, the amounts that could be excluded (below \$600k for example) and whether the fee is paid by the purchaser or the seller.
- This would be a recurring revenue source for the town and could mount to a decent amount of money.

The bad news is that there is a low likelihood of this getting passed. Only two towns have gotten something passed and since then the realty associations have blocked further passage. Governor Baker has also expressed his aversion to passage of this kind of fee.

Kara indicated that Jamie Eldridge has signed onto 868.

Multi-family unit housing legislation for MBTA adjacent communities has been passed and many towns will be looking to raise revenues. Towns could forego \$ incentives to opt out due to the other \$\$\$ costs to build new schools, infrastructure, etc.

The Boston bill is aiming to put a fee on the amount of a transaction over \$2M. However, Baker does support affordable housing, so maybe he is amenable to other towns implementing this fee. Vote on this will be May 9<sup>th</sup>. Jane felt it could be valuable to find out if MAHT is aware of this bill.

While valuable, even if this is passed, it doesn't fulfill the charge by the SB to find revenue sources to offset operating costs. If Harvard moves money on a regular basis to MAHT, then this would help. Paul Green said that in theory it could offset, but according to current practice it wouldn't offset annual expenses.

Members discussed whether or not to include it in our recommendations to the Select Board. While it may not directly impact the annual budget, it's still a possible positive move for the town to consider.

Kara proposed writing a letter of support for 868. If that doesn't pass then Harvard could submit a Home Rule Petition.

Jane suggested that the intent behind the bill may be to extract the fee from the seller who has made gains on their property.

Members discussed how Harvard qualifies as an adjacent town. Proximity to Littleton was the triggering factor. It's not just the land that's considered to be "Devens" with the proximity to Ayer. You don't have to put the housing within .5 mile of the train station. Harvard could make the case that housing at Devens could meet the requirement. It could also rezone some of the horse properties which are close to the Littleton station. It seems that Harvard has options. It doesn't need to be 50 contiguous acres.

Kara asked if members had interest in pursuing an AirB&B tax. In the past there was only one property (Friendly Crossings) that would fall under the "lodging" tax, but there are multiple properties in Harvard that would now fall in this category (e.g. houses being rented out on Bare Hill Pond). Further research is needed to determine how to get the data on how revenues would be collected (self-reported?, AirB&B pays?).

Kara reviewed a resource for getting grants. The SB received information on a grant program offered by the Executive Office of Community and Housing Development. They gave out \$303M last year. This could be a revenue source for Agricultural entities in Harvard.

Members discussed other possible options for raising \$. Festivals? (take a huge amount of work and the funding beneficiary is usually a charity or specific items/projects). The appeal of raising money for “reducing your taxes” isn’t appealing. There’s a reason we tax people – because other funds are much harder raise. (e.g. Flea Market which requires a huge amount of work and is not a huge revenue generator.)

Dan Daly may not be able to continue so if members know of anyone else who’d like to join the effort, please reach out.

Kara will send out a draft of our recommendations. Our next meeting is Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:28pm by unanimous vote on a motion by Paul Green, seconded by Bob O’Shea.

Respectfully submitted,

SusanMary Redinger  
Member, Revenue Ideation Committee