

# Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: January-February 2017

*Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Director of Community & Economic Development*

1. **1934 Ayer Central Fire Station:** Subsequent to receipt of a construction/rehabilitation cost estimate from local building contractor for the rehabilitation/restoration of the cupola, the slate roof, fascia/cornice, and stepped brick gables in the amount of \$184,747; and subsequent to discussions with Mass Dept. of Housing & Community Development Grant Administrator, it was decided not to proceed with the CDBG "Spot Blight/Public Emergency" Grant application. The "Spot Blight/Public Emergency" tactical approach was not coming together as a highly-competitive project request. Simultaneously, the AOCED has been approached by two (2) prospective buyers/redevelopers of the property. The AOCED has been working with both individuals, and both have expressed that they are prepared to submit proposals for acquisition and redevelopment of the property. To this end, the Town of Ayer was legally required to re-issue the public RFP in order to accept both of these prospective offers. The RFP was re-issued on 2/16/2017, with a proposal deadline of 3/24/2017. The AOCED will also be proceeding with contacting and meeting with administration, faculty & students of Nashoba Regional Technical School to discuss and determine if, how, and when the noteworthy historic property may serve as a construction working/learning restoration & preservation project, either integrated into the private developers proposal, or in the event both of these prospective deals does not come together. We continue to move forward to bring this great downtown property back to life for the social, cultural & economic future of the Town of Ayer.
2. **Industrial Attraction, Retention & Partnership:** The AOCED has been working closely with Ayer-based Freight Rail Industries and with our partners at Pan Am Railways in order to improve freight rail service, to mitigate rail congestion, deliveries, pick-ups, track-switching, etc. at the Ayer Junction Rail Yard Facility. Subsequent to meetings and discussions with owners of 95 Fitchburg Rd. Industrial property, the industrial companies located at 95 Fitchburg Rd., and officials of Pan Am Railways, together we prepared and submitted on 2/17/2017 the "Ayer Freight Hub Congestion Mitigation Project" Grant Application through the MassDOT Industrial Rail Access Program (IRAP). This effort has served to cultivate, foster and strengthen the AOCED ties and constructive relationship with officials at Pan Am Railways, and our local freight rail industries, and industrial land property owners. We plan of moving forward with our Ayer Freight Rail Info Exchange Group, and to continue working to make Ayer, New England's most attractive and favorable freight rail industry location for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

3. **Cains Food Property Disposition & Future:** For several months the AOCED has been diligently trying to make contact with the new parent-company of Cains (Treehouse Foods), so as to establish working relations & open communications with regard to the future sale or tenanting of this important Ayer industrial food-processing & production plant. Last week our breakthrough came, and the AOCED is now working directly with the Stubblebine Co. of Lexington, MA (commercial property brokers). The Director of the AOCED will be meeting next week with the principals of the Stubblebine Co. at their Lexington offices to discuss and directly participate in the marketing of the property. It is the understanding of the AOCED that the property may be sold to GFI Partners of Boston, MA. Subsequent to the meeting at Stubblebine Co. next week, the AOCED will make status report to Town Administrator.
4. **Status of Local Company Considering Re-Location from Ayer:** Last month's report included an item regarding a long-time local company considering relocation from Ayer to Devens. The AOCED engaged with the business owner, identified possible new locations in Ayer, and had good interaction in understanding the reasons for the considered move. The good news for Ayer is that the business-owner has decided to remain located in Ayer at their current location and to make improvements. The Dir. of AOCED will be meeting with the business owner next week, and will build stronger relations and assure the long-term retention of this business in Ayer.
5. **Tour and Meeting with Innovative Medical Design, Inc.:** Conducted a great tour and meeting with Tai Kien President & CEO of Innovative Medical Design, Inc. of Ayer, MA. An extraordinary personal business success-story and most noteworthy demonstration of how the Innovation-based/Knowledge-based economy can locate and grow in Ayer, MA. Kein & the Dir. of the AOCED are currently working together to outreach to Ayer-Shirley Regional High School to conduct tours of the innovation company building & labs, and to develop a structured program to introduce our young students in Ayer to innovative design and to the fact that our young people don't have to locate to Kendall Square or Silicon Valley to become future innovation success-stories; they can make it happen right here in Ayer, MA.