

# **Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development**

Monthly Report: August-September 2017

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

**Redevelopment of Historic Ayer Central Fire Station:** On 9/20/2017 the proposed buyer and redeveloper of the Historic Fire Station Building went before the Town of Ayer Zoning Board of Appeals seeking three (3) minor variances for the property in order to proceed with purchase of subject property. The Town of Ayer Zoning Board of Appeals approved the requested variances. Therefore, the AOCED will proceed in coordination with buyer and buyer's legal counsel to schedule final purchase and real estate closing on the property. The buyer developer plans to begin stabilizing various exterior elements in order to weather the coming winter. He will also begin a general clean-out and interior gutting of the Historic Fire Station through the winter months in preparation for full reconstruction and redevelopment with the coming spring of 2018. The buyer estimates the redevelopment project (which will result in the creation of 8-9 high-quality new residential rental units) will require approximately 1-year to complete. With this the AOCED has successfully achieved our mission and task of preserving the Historic 1934 Fire Station, transferring the property to the private sector (which will now go on the tax rolls and generate revenue for the Town of Ayer), restoring the original historic architectural exterior, and delivering new and expanded residential vitality and associated positive economic & social impact to Downtown Ayer and the Commuter Rail Station. This successful project will serve to promote and escalate overall market confidence, strength, and new high-quality investment into Downtown Ayer; a noteworthy community & economic development success story.

**Ayer Master Plan Process:** AS we are in the "End-Game" phase of the Ayer Master Plan process, we are fully engaged in the review, comment, editing and refinement of the various Master Plan sections, including Economic Development, Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure, Governmental Structure, Public Facilities, Planning & Development Regulations, Land-Use Codes, Environmental Conditions, Sustainability, Neighborhoods, etc.; the Ayer Master Plan Steering Comm. will be scheduling and conducting a Master Plan Review Public Input Forum in the month of October.

**Ayer IDFA Loan Program Administration:** The AOCED has been contacted by and engaged with a number of requests by former and current borrowers with regard to the discharge of mortgages (resulting from refinancing of commercial property & business debt obligations). Also the AOCED is dedicating significant staff hours to reviewing and reformatting loan portfolio files in order to better administer and manage the IDFA Loan program. Also, with a number of loan pay-offs having been executed the IDFA Loan Pool is quite substantial at this time, therefore the AOCED will begin to gear-up to actively promote the available loan funds for well-qualified prospective commercial borrowers.

**Cains Property Future/American Superconductor Corp:** The AOCED as part of the municipal American Superconductor Corp. (AMSC) "Attraction Team" scheduled and engaged in a "proposed Special Tax Assessment Agreement (STAA)" presentation to the Board of Selectmen on 9/5/2017. Officials of AMSC also participated. The Ayer BOS voted in favor of authorizing the municipal team to proceed with negotiations with (AMSC) on the proposed STAA. On 9/13/2017 the municipal team conducted a presentation and engaged in information exchange with the Ayer Finance Committee with regard to the proposed STAA. The Ayer Finance Comm. voted in favor of recommending approval of the STAA at the upcoming Special Town Meeting on (9/25/2017), and commended the municipal team for our efforts and good work in the attraction of AMSC to the former Cain property. On 9/14/2017 the municipal team scheduled and conducted an Open Public Information Forum on the proposed STAA with AMSC. The Public Information Forum was well attended and of great benefit to the public process. Both the CEO & the CFO of American Superconductor participated in the Public Information Forum. On 9/20/2017 the Dir. of Community & Economic Development represented the Town of Ayer at the Mass. Office of Business Development/Economic Assistance Coordinating Council quarterly Hearing at Worcester City Hall. The Dir. of AOCED was joined by AMSC CFO John Kosiba at the Hearing with the result being the proposed "local incentive" STAA received a favorable vote for the Town to proceed with the agreement for possible final approval at the Ayer Special Town Meeting scheduled for 9/25/2017.

**Ayer Office of Economic & Community Development Webpage Design & Launch:** The AOCED working in partnership with the Ayer Office of Information Technology and the Ayer Information technology Committee have contracted the professional (web-design) services of Virtual Towns & Schools Inc. (VTS). The AOCED has composed & produced the first DRAFT of the Webpage visual framework and content sections. This product was forwarded to (VTS) on 9/6/2017. The first design product was submitted to AOCED & IT Committee for review & comment. AOCED met with IT Committee on 9/19/2017 to review and critique. AOCED will next forward first DRAFT back to VTS with comments, critique and client preferences for improved second DRAFT from VTS. AOCED will meet with IT Committee with next DRAFT and move towards finalization of new Webpage and proposed launch within two-months.

**A Form-Based Code for Park Street Corridor:** The AOCED having been awarded a District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Grant by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to engage the citizens of Ayer in an open public process to investigate, formulate and produce a "model" new innovative zoning approach known as "Form-Based Codes" for the Park Street Corridor ("Local Roadway" section between Main Street & Groton Street). For additional info on Form-Based Codes please reference the Form-Based Code Institute at [www.formbasedcodes.org](http://www.formbasedcodes.org) ; the MRPC has conducted a full land & building inventory of the Park Street Corridor, the Dir. of AOCED

has conducted a full Form-Based Code invitational presentation for MRPC officials & planning/development officials of other MRPC Region towns & cities at the Ayer Great Hall in August 2017. The Dir. of AOCED scheduled, promoted and conducted a Park Street Form-Based Code Public Informational Walking Tour on Saturday, Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>. The Dir. of AOCED has scheduled and will conduct a Park Street Corridor Form-Based Code Public Presentation at Ayer Town Hall (Great Hall) on 9/21/2017, and this will be followed up by a Park Street Form-Based Code Public Visioning & Design Session scheduled for 9/28/2017 at Ayer Town Hall (Great Hall). The Dir. of AOCED will begin composing & formulating the new model Park Street Corridor Form-Based Code in-house; no consultants will be engaged in this innovative urban zoning production process, as Dir. of AOCED, Alan S. Manoian is one of New England's leading experts on Form-Based Codes.