

Town of Ayer

Office of the Town Planner



Town of Ayer | Ayer Town Hall | 1 Main Street, 3rd Floor | Ayer, MA 01432 | 978-772-8218 | www.ayer.ma.us

Monthly Staff Report

To: Robert Pontbriand, Town Administrator

From: Mark Archambault, Ayer Town Planner

Re: Monthly report for the period December 20, 2017 – January 19, 2018

Date: January 22, 2018

1. Project Review: During the last one month period, I prepared Staff Reports for the Planning Board on several cases that came before it in January. These included 3 ANR plans, the Site Plan application for self-storage units at 217 West Main St. (continued to February 1), and the Site Plan application for the MART Parking Facility (approved by the PB on January 18).
2. Zoning Bylaw Review and Public Process: The Building Commissioner, Community Development Director and I completed our internal review of the proposed Zoning Bylaw in January. I am now in the process of finalizing and documenting the minor changes we made to the 'Judi Barrett draft' Bylaw of September 5, 2017. These changes will be presented at a public hearing to be held on February 15, 2018. In addition, I have prepared a PowerPoint presentation which I will present at three public forums on January 24, February 13 and March 7, 2018 in preparation for the Special Town Meeting vote on March 19, 2018.
3. Ayer Solar Energy Systems Overlay District Bylaw: I made minor changes to the proposed Solar Energy Systems Overlay District bylaw, which is being proposed for adoption at the March 19, 2018 Special Town Meeting alongside the comprehensive update of the Ayer Zoning Bylaw. The Solar Bylaw governs the placement and operating standards for small, medium and large-scale solar energy systems throughout Ayer. Large-scale ground-mounted solar energy systems (those covering more than one acre) will be allowed through special permit and/or site plan review in the General Business and Industrial districts but will be prohibited in Residential districts.

4. DLTA Grant Application: On January 2, 2018 I submitted a District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grant application to the MRPC to assist Ayer with identifying and mapping its existing conservation and open space holdings and prioritizing parcels and land for future conservation efforts. The heart of the Executive Summary of the application is provided below:

The Town of Ayer is in the process of identifying and mapping its existing conservation lands, including land in Chapter 61, as a first step in the process of prioritizing parcels for future conservation efforts. The 2017 fall Special Town Meeting authorized the creation and funding of a conservation fund to enable the Town to act quickly when land is taken out of Chapter 61 designation or becomes available for purchase from a private owner. The initial deposit into the Conservation Fund was \$500,000, transferred from Ayer's Community Preservation Act funds. The Conservation Fund has been set up to accept future donations of land and monetary funds and will be overseen by the Ayer Conservation Commission. The Ayer's Open Space and Recreation Plan is in the process of being updated and finalized. Until this is complete, the Town of Ayer lacks a thorough and accurate listing of its conservation and Chapter 61 lands. This can be resolved through assistance afforded by a DLTA grant. Additionally, Ayer would like to create a prioritized list of conservation and open space parcels to consider for future purchase with the Conservation Fund.

5. Interdepartmental Review Process: I am in the process of developing an improved process for interdepartmental review of development projects that come before the ZBA, Planning Board, Conservation Commission and the Board of Health. Town Hall staff, as well as the Superintendent of Public Works, involved in development review will be meeting weekly over the next month or two to develop and fine-tune this process, which will determine the ideal order of Board and Commission review for plans making their way through the permitting process. A key aspect of this process will be informal 'pre-application meetings' at which applicants meet with the Town Planner, Conservation Agent, Building Inspector, ZBA staff person and the Health Agent to coordinate review before the various Boards. This will result in improved communication and expedited review in town.