

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: September-October 2018

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

Award of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Prospect & Oak St.

Infrastructure Improvement Project: The Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development (AOCED) & Ayer Public Works Dept. have begun planning, coordination & scheduling work as the Town of Ayer was awarded a \$750,000 CDBG Grant for public infrastructure improvements for Prospect St. & Oak St. in the historic Grove Pond Neighborhood in July 2018. The execution of the Contractual Agreement for the US Dept. of HUD funding in partnership with officials of the Mass Dept. of Housing & Community Development (DHCD). Is completed & submitted. The (AOCED) & Dept. of Public Works are actively meeting on a weekly basis to formulate & prepare the Construction Project BID documents. The (AOCED) has outreached to the Clerk Magistrate & Hon. Judge Guzman of the Ayer District Courthouse in order to schedule & conduct a series of planning & coordination meetings for the upcoming neighborhood roadway reconstruction scheduled for early Spring 2019. This project will require intense and direct design exchange, communication, logistical planning & cooperation between the Town of Ayer, the project construction company & the Ayer District Courthouse in order to successfully deliver this project on-time and on-budget. In addition, the (AOPCED) will be scheduling & conducting a "Grove Pond Neighborhood Construction Project Review, Comment & Communications Meeting" which will be conducted at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Hall in the neighborhood for November 2018; this will be the first in a series of Neighborhood Meetings as the project progresses.

Pursuit of (Competitive) 2019 US Dept. of HUD Community Development Block Grant:

The (AOCED) has launched and engaged for the pursuit of the next highly-competitive US Dept. of HUD Community Development Block Grant for 2019-2020. Although the completed & complex grant application is scheduled for submission in March 2019, the extremely detailed and structured civic engagement process (required for successful grant submission) must begin now in the Fall of 2018. To this end, the (AOCED) has scheduled and will conduct the first 2019 US Dept. of HUD CDBG Town of Ayer "Public Engagement Hearing" on Wednesday, October 24th at 6:00PM at Ayer Town Hall. This critically important

Public Hearing will begin the process of hearing, discussing & determining the public's opinion on what are CDBG funding priorities should be for the upcoming year, and for this grant submission in particular. The (AOCED) believes that the most important need in the community for the coming year and for many years to come is the (provision of more high-quality affordable housing) in close proximity to Downtown Ayer, public transportation, mixed-use districts, walkable neighborhoods, and to employment opportunities. The maximum grant amount that the Town of Ayer can pursue for the 2019 grant cycle is approximately \$500,000; due to the fact that the Town was awarded \$750,000 last year. The (AOCED) will make every effort to continue with our outstanding track record of successfully delivering substantial Federal CDBG Grants for the residents & neighborhoods of Ayer, MA.

Park Street Corridor & West Main St. Corridor Form-Based Code Formulation/Production Process Schedule:

The (AOCED) scheduled, promoted and conducted a highly-successful and well-attended "Park Street & West Main Street "Visual Preference Survey" Public Forum on Thursday, Oct 11th at Ayer Town Hall. The "Visual Preference Survey" citizen-participatory planning session is a critical & required first milestone in the formulation, production & delivery of a Form-Based Code Zoning Regulation for both under & poorly developed Gateway Corridors into the Town of Ayer. Over forty (40) residents of Ayer energetically & constructively participated in the new (street & building form) zoning development session. The session strongly evidenced and authorized municipal planners to proceed with the formulation of a new zoning regulation for Park & West Main St. that delivers a "Traditional Downtown Street & Building Form" with on-street parking, sidewalks, buildings built up to the sidewalk line, 2-3 stories in height, with high street-level display window proportionality, and designed as true (Complete Streets). The (AOCED) will proceed with regularly scheduled Form Based Code formulation/production updates & (WORKSHOPS) with the Ayer Planning Board over the course of the next six-months. Dr. of (AOCED), a Form-Based Code expert, will also conduct ongoing FBC input sessions with all municipal departments/committees/commissions including Police, Fire, Conservation, Public Works, Community Preservation, Board of Health, Zoning Board of Appeals, Historic Commission, Building Inspector, etc. through the Code production process. Also, a series of Public FBC Design Charrettes will be conducted through the winter/early spring months. The new Park Street & West

Ayer Commuter Rail Station Public Space Design Improvement Effort:

Update: The new urban space improvement design concept (for the Downtown Ayer Commuter Rail Station) developed and advanced by the (AOCED) has been exceedingly well-received by MBTA officials – to the degree that the MBTA has taken the initiative and as of Friday, Oct. 19th has (funded), acquired & has begun to install the proposed new “design fence” which will serve to visually screen the unsightly, disgraceful and unacceptable condition of the rear rail yard in Downtown Ayer. Initially, the (AOCED) was proceeding under the proposition that the Town of Ayer would be responsible to fund the proposed new Fence Screening Treatment – with installation upon authorization by MBTA. The design concept & approach was such that the MBTA decided upon themselves to take responsibility for funding the acquisition & installation of the new fence. The (AOCED) has also begun the process of securing cost-estimates for the all-important “Artistic Fence Wrap” product treatment which will result in an unprecedented improvement in the overall design quality & presentation of the Downtown Ayer Commuter Rail Station. The (AOCED) will be receiving cost-estimates for the Fence Wrap on the week of Oct 22nd; and the (AOCED) will select three (3) Visual Design Treatments for review & comment by an internal municipal team & MBTA officials. The Town of Ayer will be responsible to fund the cost of the acquisition & installation of the Fence Wrap Product Treatment. It is intended to complete this landmark public space design improvement project by mid-December 2018. The (AOCED) will continue to relentlessly create, develop, advance and make-real high-quality urban space design improvements to the Downtown Ayer Commuter Rail Station.

Ayer IDFA Commercial Lending Program New Products & Promotion:

The Dir. of (AOCED) scheduled and conducted a meeting of the Ayer Industrial Development Finance Authority to provide an update/status of the Ayer IDFA Loan Portfolio, and to discuss the disposition of several current commercial loans. In addition, the Ayer IDFA Board of Directors have concurred with Dir. of (AOCED) and directed him to develop and launch a new Ayer Commercial Building & Façade Lending Program & Promotional Platform. In addition, the Dir. of (AOCED) has recommended and has been directed to engage in a new Promotional Platform to generate more commercial lending prospects during this challenging time for municipal lending programs, in that, with private banking commercial lending rates still exceeding low, combined with an exceedingly strong local & regional economy – borrowers do not really need to seek lending beyond their local banking institutions. Municipal lending programs

are most often at their strongest when the local banks have constrained their lending terms & when the economy is weak, unstable & unpredictable. The Ayer IDFA commercial lending program will continue to serve as a critical player providing “gap-lending”, and specialized lending products at exceedingly favorable terms.

Community Development Professional Conferences & Program/Projects:

Over the past month and a half the (AOCED) has had the opportunity to participate in two excellent conferences, the Massachusetts Housing Partnership and the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, both organized by MHP. In addition, the department participated in MAPC's, Municipal Partnership Conference which was held in conjunction with the Baker Administration. The take away from all of these conferences was the importance of housing and affordable housing to the states development. With the information from these three conferences OCED has been reviewing the new Ayer Master Plan, housing recommendations and has set our goals for the coming year. The Department is proceeding with the FY18 CDBG grant start-up, this includes issuing two RFP for both a Rehab specialist and Lead Inspector. The NOI/RROF has been completed and submitted to the DHCD. We hope to start rehabbing houses in the coming month. The Office of Community and Economic Development worked in conjunction with the offices of the Selectmen and Planning Department to submit a planning grant to MOC for the Town's ADA Transition Plan. We are in the process of closing out the FY 18 Drug Court.

American Superconductor & Local education Institutions “Innovation Technology Apprenticeship Program” Development:

The (AOCED) formulated and placed the development & enactment of a “Innovation Technology Apprenticeship Program” with Ayer's local educational institutions as part of the legal contractual agreement contained in Special Tax Assessment Agreement for American Superconductor, and authorized by the voters of Ayer in a Special Town meeting in fall 2017. To this end, the Dir. of AOCED/Ayer Town Manager & Assistant Town Manager scheduled and conducted a meeting with American Superconductor (AMSC) officials in early October 2018 to begin the formulation, coordination, partnership & development effort to launch this exciting new local economic development platform. In addition, Dir. of AOCED has outreached, contacted, discussed and is actively coordinating the scheduling of a series of program formulation meeting between officials of the Ayer/Shirley Regional School District & the

Nashoba Valley Technical School & American Superconductor. The first meetings will take place at the Global Headquarters of AMSC in Ayer with invited educational institution officials. AMSC officials, with (AOCED), will meet with each school delegations individually & then proceed with joint meetings as well. All parties have expressed great enthusiasm, excitement and encouragement for the establishment of this landmark partnership program for the upcoming year.

Nefflix Television Series Filming in Ayer: *(More to Come next Month with Full Report).*

AOCED Projects Proposed for the Upcoming Year:

- Ayer Master Plan (Implementation Plan) Program Management & Leadership
- Downtown Ayer Comprehensive Revitalization & Redevelopment Program
- (AOCED) Webpage Maximization Project / Corporate Attraction Program
- Preparation for the upcoming Downtown Ayer Winter Holiday Candlelight Stroll & Holiday Tree Lighting Event.