

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

Monthly Report: April 2019

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

**Administration of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Prospect & Oak St. Infrastructure Improvement Project:** The AOCED & Ayer DPW have been working closely together in finalizing project scheduling, coordination meetings with contractor, neighborhood engagement, intercommunication with partners at the Ayer District Courthouse, and municipal departments. Dir. of AOCED, Supt DPW & DPW Engineer met with Ayer District Courthouse officials on April 19<sup>th</sup> to review construction plans & conduct site walk. The project is planned to begin in June 2019 and complete in approx. October 2019.

**More Movies in Ayer:** Dir. of AOCED was contact in early April by Location Scouts for Castle Rock Productions (Stephen King & JJ Abrams) seeking locations for the Season 2 filming of the HULU Television Series "Castle Rock". The Location Scouts were interested in the Ayer Historic Fire Station on Washington St. as a long-term set location (April-September). The Dir. of AOCED immediately engaged & met with Location Scouts & property-owner on site. Ultimately & unfortunately the Scouts decided that the property would not serve their purposes, but once again the Town of Ayer was commended by the film professionals as to our exceptional & consistent responsiveness and good partnership whenever a good filming prospect presents itself to our community. Note: Castle Rock did secure another long-term filming location in Ayer at the DPW yards off Bishop Rd./Brook St.

## **Pursuit of (Competitive) 2019 US Dept. of HUD Community Development Block Grant for Redevelopment of the Historic 1934 Ayer Central Fire Station for New Downtown Affordable Housing:**

Local Community Preservation Act grant funding application was submitted by property-owner and approved unanimously by the Ayer CPC (Community Preservation Committee) in the amount of \$190,000. The breakdown - \$150,000 to fund development of (6) new deed restricted affordable housing units, and \$40,000 for historic building façade preservation work. The funding request will be placed as Warrant Article for May 13<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting. The AOCED continues to provide updates to our US Dept. of HUD CDBG Grant partners at Mass DHCD with regard to the redevelopment of the Ayer Historic Fire Station. The AOCED is

scheduled to package and deliver a “highly-competitive” and “winning” CDBG Grant application in the amount of \$750,000 for the 2019-2020 grant round. Also, good progress is being made with the stabilization & reconstruction of the historic Fire Station Colonial-Revival raised brick-gables by Scala & Sons Masonry during the month of April. Great to see the staging, hydraulic lifts & brick masons working away at the grand old building after so many years of disrepair.

### **Park Street Corridor Form-Based Code Formulation/Production Process**

#### **Schedule:**

The month of April was dominated by detailed & extensive production work on the Downtown Ayer/Park Street Form-Based Code zoning bylaw by the Dir. of AOCED. Dir. of AOCED attended all Planning Board Meetings in April and engaged in full Code production review/comment/refinement process in collaboration with Planning Board & Town Planner. Legal review (KP Law) of proposed Code also was fully engaged. Office of the Ayer Town Planner & Ayer Planning Board. Dir. of AOCED made full Code presentation at the April 23<sup>rd</sup> (Public Hearing) at the Planning Board Meeting. The Form-Based Code is proposed for submission for June 10<sup>th</sup> Special Town Meeting.

### **Ayer Commuter Rail Station “Historic Ayer Minton Tiles” Public Space Design Improvement Effort:**

In April the bold and vibrant new Downtown Ayer Commuter Rail Station “Historic Ayer Minton Tiles” Design Banner treatment was installed by the MBTA/Keolis under the direction of the Dir. of AOCED. The final delivery of this project was six months in the making – and has been received by the general public & rail commuters with great satisfaction and thanks. This innovative & noteworthy Downtown Ayer public space design improvement project is the first of many future incremental public space design improvements necessary for Downtown Ayer to attract new high-quality businesses and residential development in close proximity to the Ayer Commuter Rail Station. The (Art Banner) design concept at the Rail Station has been embraced by the MBTA who have contacted the Dir. of AOCED stating that they would like to introduce the same design treatment to other MBTA Commuter Rail Stations – once again, Ayer leads the way.

### **2019 Ayer Fourth of July Celebration Management:**

The Dir. of AOCED is actively organizing and managing the upcoming Town of Ayer 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration. An important change for this year's event – as per

the Ayer Police Dept. & Ayer Fire Dept. the Ayer 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade on Main Street will begin at 4:00PM in the afternoon; in past years the Parade has started as 2:00PM. The Dir. of AOCED is working to bring new public experiences to the event at Pirone Park including a traditional Pie Eating Contest, a Hula Hoop Contest (200 Hula Hoops); live Dance Performances by local dance Companies/Students; etc. The Dir. of AOCED believes that the event could become more of a “traditional New England town” experience (rather than more of a “mid-way carnival”) experience. AOCED is also working to introduce new Parade participants & spectacles, including the “horizontal” carrying of a great American Flag (20ft. X 38ft.) as was done in Ayer’s 1918 Armistice Day Parade, and encouraging more local clubs, organizations, companies, groups to introduce new parade floats & walking groups. Fundraising & sponsorship engagement is always well underway. The Ayer 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration Event is scheduled for July 6, 2019.

#### **Implementation of the Ayer Master Plan:**

In April, the Dir. of AOCED initiated a follow-up individual interview process for all departments/staff in preparation for the next phase of the Ayer Master Plan Implementation Process; as the Departmental Luncheon Roundtable Sessions proved most successful in bringing the various departments together on a regular basis to begin (weaving-together) the extensive lists and responsibilities of departmental & board/committee/commission with regard to delivering stated Objectives & Goals.

#### **West Main Street Corridor Redevelopment/Transformation Partnership Project:**

In April, the Dir. of AOCED scheduled and conducted planning & preparation meetings with various participants in the upcoming West Main Street Corridor Redevelopment/Transformation Project including Devens Enterprise Commission, MassDevelopment, Ayer Public Works. In April, the Dir. of AOCED also contacted, scheduled and conducted meeting with new Ex. VP of Devens Jessica Strunkin to review the West Main Street Redevelopment Project and other various matters regrading Ayer & Devens future development. It has been agreed that the partnership group (Town of Ayer, Devens Enterprise Comm., MassDevelopment & perhaps the Town of Shirley) will collaboratively pursue a large MassWorks Grant to fund major redesign, reconstruction & improvement of the public infrastructure and to introduce a “Complete Street” design treatment to Ayer’s West Main Street Corridor spanning to the Verbeck Gate at Devens. The Dir. of AOCED is the point-person/lead on this project – with full group

meetings starting in mid-May, as the MassWorks Grant cycle opens on May 2019 with submission deadline of August 2019.

**Office of Community Development: Office of Community Development  
CDBG FY 18 Grant**

The first housing rehab project is close to completion. There has been a number of change orders on this project due to rotted sills and other emergency conditions. We plan to have this project completed early in May. We are in the process of qualifying two other single family properties and one three family, with a goal of having one or two of these projects being approved and started by late May. After qualifying two properties in March, both residents withdraw from the program.

The Prospect and Oak Street infrastructure project plans have been finalized, and work has been scheduled to begin in early June. The pre-construction meeting and public forum are scheduled for the beginning of May.

**Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC)**

The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee had their third meeting on April 12<sup>th</sup>. The committee is waiting to hear regarding their MRPC DLTA application requesting assistance writing a Housing Production Plan, notices are expected early May. Janet Providakes reported on the CPC proposed funding for 6 affordable units in the Historic Fire Station.

**CHAPA: Fair Housing Forum**

The office of Community and Economic Development participated in CHAPA's "Fair Housing Forum: Planning for Fair Housing Up Front" on April 29 held in Newton City Hall. It was a very interesting meeting with a lot of data on not just affordable housing but fair housing issues in the Commonwealth.