

Town of Ayer

Office of the Town Planner



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Monthly Staff Report

To: Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager

From: Mark Archambault, Ayer Town Planner

Re: Monthly report for the period April 20 – May 20, 2019

Date: May 20, 2019

1. Project Review:

The Planning Board approved a Site Plan amendment for minor modifications to a multi-family housing development at 41 East Main Street. The Board also approved an ANR plan for 2 new house lots off of Marshall Street, as well as a 2-year extension of Special Permit and Site Plan approval for 22 Fitchburg Road (the Shop n' Save site) to provide additional time for Geronimo Properties to organize the construction of the additional small retail buildings that were approved in 2017 at the eastern end of their large parking lot.

The Planning Department also received, and I have begun review of, a **Definitive Subdivision Plan at 54 & 56 Littleton Road**, which is showing 20 lots where the Preliminary Plan had 14. The Preliminary Plan was submitted prior to the October, 2018 Town Meeting vote which put limits on the amount of wetlands and steep slopes that can count towards the required amount of open space. Initial review is identifying several issues of concern with this plan that will likely necessitate several Planning Board meetings to get through the official public hearing for this application. It is anticipated that the Definitive Subdivision Plan for the Shaker Mill Pond Estates will also be submitted in the near future, which will ensure that the Planning Board has a busy few months reviewing and working with the applicants to fine-tune these plans through the public hearing process.

2. Assistance with administrative matters, Downtown / Park Street Form-Based Code:

I assisted the Director of Community and Economic Development with making sure that KP Law properly reviewed all applicable sections of the Zoning Bylaw, Zoning Map and Tables of Use and Dimensional Requirements for the proposed Downtown/Park Street Form-Based Code District. We were able to convince them that it needs to be treated as a new Zoning District per se, and not as an Overlay District, which would have resulted in more cumbersome administration of this provisions of the District.

I wrote the public hearing notice for an additional Planning Board public hearing on the above matters which the Planning Board will conduct on May 28, 2019.

3. Consideration of Major Zoning Amendments for the Spring, 2019:

The Planning Board closed the public hearing on the proposed Recreational Marijuana Zoning Bylaw on April 23, 2019. KP Law later identified a few very minor non-substantive changes that they suggested be made to clarify several provisions. I was a bit surprised since these items were in the very first draft that I had sent them, which they did not catch until after submission of the post-hearing Bylaw. According to KP Law, these do not rise to the level of requiring an additional public hearing, and the Planning Board approved these very minor changes at their May 7, 2019 meeting. The Bylaw is now ready for submission on the warrant for the June 10, 2019 Special Town Meeting. I am working on improving my presentation for the June 10, 2019 Special Town Meeting.

4. Misc. and Upcoming Projects:

I have continued research in connection with the planned **Petapawag Overlay District** which would develop special standards for any development in the currently forested part of Ayer in the A-1 Residential zoning district. These standards could involve protecting additional open space in subdivisions, transfer of development rights and other planning techniques that would better guide development in a more environmentally sensitive manner. As part of this research, I am also considering additional ways to **improve the Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) section** of the Zoning Bylaw, as I believe that the mathematical formula developed by the Consultant back in 2016 is resulting in more lots / units than would have been possible in a conventional subdivision on the same properties. I am consulting with other planning experts on this topic to develop the best possible approach to amending this section.

I have also been discussing the timing of several other amendments to the Zoning Bylaw with the Town Manager, including ‘Accessory Apartments’ which would help Ayer to meet its affordable housing obligations.

Other research projects undertaken in late-April and ongoing into May of 2019 include the ability to require joint traffic studies between several applicants, further amendments to the Planning Board Administrative Rules and Regulations and legal research related to the applications that the Board has reviewed and is reviewing.

5. Subdivision Regulations:

The completed draft Subdivision Regulations are now being reviewed by the Superintendent of Public Works, who needs to be comfortable with the new Regulations given his vital role in advising the Planning Board on technical engineering issues related to subdivision applications. If his review can be completed by the end of May, 2019, we will move as quickly as possible to have these Regulations approved by the Planning Board and ‘on the books’ before more Subdivision applications come in.

