

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: May 2020

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

Historic (1934) Ayer Central Fire Station Redevelopment - CDBG Grant

Application Production & Scheduled Submission: The AOCED completed and submitted a strong grant application on March 6th for a highly-competitive \$800,000 US Dept. of HUD CDBG Grant which would provide partial (public-sector) funding - for an estimated \$1.5 million affordable-housing redevelopment project in the long-vacant historic (1934) Ayer Central Fire Station Building in Downtown Ayer. The project applicant went before the Ayer Planning Board on May 26th to request the modification of on-site parking requirements, and to present a modified site plan. And as reported by Ayer Town Planner – *“Continued discussion of the parking-related Special Permits being sought for the historic Fire Station at 14 Washington St. (conversion into 6 apartments). As the applicant is now amending their application to have a lowered number of spaces all located on the lot itself, the Planning Board continued the hearing until June 9th. A new hearing may need to be posted for if the changes necessitate such. The concurrent Site Plan review for 14 Washington Street was also continued to June 9 pending submission of a stormwater management plan to the DPW and resolution of other matters.”* Notification of successful grant awards will be announced by Mass DHCD & Gov. Baker in July 2020.

Ayer Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition/Action Plan Grant

Application & Production Process: The Office of the Town Manager in coordination with the AOCED has reviewed, and TM has executed contractual agreement between the Town of Ayer & MRPC for professional services in the formulation, production & delivery of Ayer’s new municipal ADA Action/Transition Plan with a total cost of \$50,000. The project was temporarily halted in March due to COVID19 State of Emergency. On May 1st the Mass Office on Disability issued notification that all ADA grant/project completion contracts may be extended upon submission & approval of “Need for Extension” Petition due no later than June 1st. The AOCED produced & delivered the Petition for “Need of Extension”, which was executed by Town Manager and forwarded to Mass MOD on May 27th. The AOCED remains in constant contact with our Project partners at Montachusett Regional Planning Commission – and are prepared to re-launch the Project upon confirmation of grant/project

extension and municipal building/facility re-opening following COVID19 State of Emergency.

AOCED & COVID19 Impact Local Business ZOOM Listening & Re-Opening Coordination Sessions and Local Business Impact:

In May, the Dir. of AOCED formulated, organized, scheduled, and conducted a ZOOM Meeting Session with Ayer's local small & large business community; as well as a Session focusing on Ayer Local Food Security. The Ayer Business Community ZOOM Meeting took place on May 6th, and the Ayer Local Food Security ZOOM Meeting on May 21st. Both COVID19 Local Impact ZOOM Meetings were very well-attended and all those participating were highly-engaged – these ZOOM Meetings provided the AOCED and Town Hall with a much better understanding, appreciation, and knowledge regarding how COVID19 has directly impacted our local community, and how the Town of Ayer can best proceed with sound and effective programs & policies to assist and support our local community with enduring and getting back to business and keeping those most vulnerable and at-risk protected, healthy and connected.

Ayer Senior Center Preliminary/Development Discussions: The AOCED participated in the Ayer Senior Center ZOOM Meeting (development discussion) on May 18th with Abacus Architects & Town Hall Team to further review and refine the proposed/preliminary site development concept.

3-5 Park Street New Building Development: On May 12th the Dir. of AOCED engaged in a ZOOM Meeting with property owners/developers of 3-5 Park Street (in the new Downtown/Park Street Form-Based Code District/T6) and with Office of the Town Planner to improve and coordinate on Site Plan for proposed new 4-story building.

Prospective Residential Development on Fitchburg Rd.: The Dir. of AOCED scheduled and conducted a ZOOM Meeting on May 21st (at weekly Land Use Roundtable) with private property owner/developer (and Town Planner & Community Dev. Program Manager) for property located on Fitchburg Rd. corridor in close proximity to the Shop & Save Supermarket – with regard to developing new multi-family residential building/s.

Restoration of the Historic (1907) Depot Sq. Fountain: The Dir. of AOCED finalized the scope of services, restoration approach, and design integration at the future

Depot Square Park at the Commuter Rail Station – and requested/received Cost Estimate from David Erickson of Erickson's Antique Stoves of Littleton, MA for Historic Fountain restoration project.

Production of the “Guide to Locating & Doing Business in Ayer”:

In May, the Dir. of AOCED continues formulation, design & production work on the Comprehensive Guide to “Locating & Doing Business in the Town of Ayer, MA”. This is a program goal for the 2020-21 year – and it will be completed for review & comment by late-June 2020.

CDBG FY18 Grant Extension:

DHCD granted an extension for the Town's FY18 CDBG grant. The Community Development Program went out to bid on a 2-family house which is being rehabilitated through the Ayer Housing Rehabilitation Program at the end of the May. This bid process had been postponed for 10 weeks due to the COVID19 shutdown.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC):

The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee met on May 22nd through ZOOM Meeting. Chairman Janet Providakes updated the Committee on the newly developed Committee web page, as well as her work with CPC to increase the assessment. Community Development Program Manager Alicia Hersey reported the initial money for COVID-19 (CARES Act) for emergency rental assistance, which has been channeled through the State's RAFT program. The Committee discussed the possibility of the need for additional assistance in the Fall, and how the proposed Housing Trust might be able to provide support. The Committee reviewed the Annual Report.

FY19 CDBG-CV Grant Application:

The Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the FY19 CDBG-CV, issued by the Mass Dept. of Housing & Community Development, was posted on May 15th. These are funds appropriated through the CARES Act of 2020 made available through the CDBG grant program for local microenterprises and social service programs. Once we had received this notice the Office of Community & Economic Development spent the next two weeks in public engagement activities defining the needs of our community. By the end of the month we had identified four social service programs and a microenterprise grant program that would greatly aid our community during this time of COVID-19.

Ayer Downtown Flower Program:

The Downtown Ayer Summer Hanging Basket Flower Program launched a week before Memorial Day. With the help of two outstanding senior work off employees we have gotten off to a good start.