

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 May 21 – June 20, 2020

Date: June 22, 2020

1. Project Review and Planning Board meetings:

The Planning Board met remotely on **Tuesday, May 26 and June 9, 2020 and will be meeting next on June 23**. The Board currently has a heavy case load which may lighten a bit in early summer before the next anticipated wave of applications (*subdivision at 76 Groton School Road, the return of the large Stratton Hill subdivision off of Wright Road, as well as several Site Plans*).

At these meetings, the Planning Board began consideration of and continued review of the following cases:

1. **Site Plan** and (parking-related) **Special Permit hearings** for the Historic Fire Station at **14 Washington Street**. Just prior to the June 9 meeting, the applicant's engineer indicated that three (3) of the proposed parking spaces in front of the historic Fire Station would be located in the Page-Moore parking lot instead, allowing for some green space and landscaping in the area in front of the bays. The Planning Board has requested that granite curbing and concrete walkways be installed rather than the bituminous that was originally specified. This hearing was continued to the June 23 Planning Board meeting, and it is likely that final approval of the Site Plan may not take place until July 14 due to the need for sufficient DPW review of the stormwater management plan and changes to the Page-Moore parking lot.
2. The Planning Board opened the **Site Plan** hearing for **Ayer Solar II-B** off (upper) Washington Street. This complex project will likely require the rest of the summer for the Planning Board to review, based likely amendments to the plan called for by Peer Review engineers and a wetland consultant hired through the Conservation Commission. The Planning Board held a site visit at the location on Saturday, June 6.
3. **Judge Robert Gardner and his son Tom Gardner** have applied for parking **Special Permits and waivers** that pertain to their forthcoming application for a mixed multi-family and commercial project under the Form-Based Code for **3-5 Park Street**. The Community and Economic Development Director and I have participated in several Zoom meetings with them to assist them in forwarding this project along.

The first phase of their application is to seek Planning Board permission, through Special Permits and waivers, to allow the required number of parking spaces to be supplied totally off-site. Given the small lot and its location adjacent to the busy Park Street / Main Street intersection, I have advised the Planning Board to approve the Special Permits and waivers necessary to move this project forward.

4. The parking lot for the **Cannongate condominium** complex on Sandy Pond Road is being completely overhauled with a new parking configuration, walkways, landscaping, lighting, and associated stormwater management improvements. This requires **Site Plan** approval from the Planning Board and possibly review from the Conservation Commission. The applicant's engineer (GPR, Inc.) is preparing a revised set of plans which will be reviewed by the Ayer DPW and Conservation Commission as well as the Planning Board.

2. Zoom meetings with potential applicants:

The following Zoom meetings with potential future applicants (other than for the above) were held in the last month:

- **Catania Oils** for expanded parking lot and associated improvements
- **Scott Shaw and Duncan Chapman** for a possible multi-family housing development at **65 Fitchburg Road**. This may end up being submitted as a 'Friendly 40B' application as they desire to build more units than is possible via the underlying zoning.

3. Zoning Bylaw amendments:

I am very pleased that the amendment to the Ayer Zoning Bylaws to **reduce the parking requirements** for apartments in the T.6 transect (transit-oriented) of the Downtown Form-Based Code district passed at the June 15 Annual Town Meeting. Now, instead of providing or making arrangements for up to 1.5 or 2 parking spaces per unit, applicants will now need to provide one (1) space per unit, regardless of the number of bedrooms. This will help to make proposals in the FBC district more viable. Given that the it is intended as a transit-oriented lifestyle zone, parking demand for new apartments in this zone will be less than for other parts of the downtown and town as a whole.

I am still working on putting together the framework for the **Petapawag ACEC Overlay District**, though that work as slowed a bit due to the intense case load now before the Planning Board.

I also recognize the need to **simplify and re-organize the parking section** of the Ayer Zoning Bylaws, as it is somewhat confusing to administer, with several provisions requiring special permits, others requiring waivers and some where it is not clear what is intended. I now see this as a high priority, especially given that applications are coming in under the Form-Based Code.

