

Town of Ayer

Office of the Town Planner



Town of Ayer | Ayer Town Hall | 1 Main Street, 3rd Floor | Ayer, MA 01432 | 978-772-8218 | www.ayer.ma.us

Monthly Staff Report

To: Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager

From: Mark Archambault, Ayer Town Planner

Re: Monthly report for the period September 21 – October 20, 2020

Date: October 20, 2020

1. Project Review and Planning Board meetings:

The Planning Board met remotely on **Tuesday, September 27, and October 13**, at which it continued review of the following cases:

The Planning Board continued the Public Hearings for the Site Plan and parking-related Special Permits for the 6 apartments proposed in the Historic Fire Station at **14 Washington Street**, as well as the **Ayer Solar II-B** large-scale solar energy project. Revised plans for the Ayer Solar II-B project were submitted to the Planning Board on September 15.

These revised plans are presently being reviewed by Supt. Mark Wetzel and Town Engineer Dan Van Schalkwyk for road design and related engineering issues. The Conservation Commission, through its Peer Review Consultants, is focusing on drainage, stormwater, stream crossing and general environmental impacts. Once the DPW submits their comments to the applicant and Planning Board, a final round of plan revisions may be necessary before the Planning Board is ready to act on the Plan. The Planning Board is still waiting for revised plans for the **14 Washington Street** project from the engineering firm GPR, Inc.

In addition to the above projects, I have been in communication with developers planning a subdivision off of Washington Street (across from the High School), a Site Plan for a Form-Based Code (FBC) apartment building at 3-5 Park Street, and a potential 40-B project at 76 Fitchburg Road.

The Planning Board also endorsed a minor Site Plan amendment for Catania Oils to provide a treed buffer along Westford Road in front of their property.

2. Review of Projects Approved over the last several years:

The Planning Board has started to revisit Site Plans and Subdivisions approved by the Board over the last several years to ensure they are being built and/or operated in compliance with the Conditions of their

Approval. On Saturday, October 17, the Planning Board met with the developer of the Condominium project at **48 Central Avenue** and discussed the work remaining to be completed and safety measures.

The meeting went well, and the developer is making quick progress at long last after several delays left the site as a large crater. Most of the work necessary to complete the project for occupancy permits will be completed by the end of November this year.

The Planning Board is planning on visiting 215 and 217 West Main Street (Self-Storage Units) and the Ayer Pharmacy soon. The Board is also awaiting the results of a study of vehicle turning movements into the **Alltown** site just south of the Carlton Rotary, which was a Condition of Site Plan Approval.

3. Zoning Bylaw amendments:

As part of my 2020 – 2021 work plan, I will work to **simplify and reorganize the parking section** of the Ayer Zoning Bylaws. During review for 3-5 Park Street, it became apparent that this section of the Bylaw had confusing and ambiguous provisions.

As parking is an integral part of any project proposed under the recently adopted Form-Based Codes, revising the parking section will simplify and expedite Planning Board review of applications. I now anticipate that these amendments will be brought before either the Spring or Fall 2021 Town Meetings.

I will also be developing a **Short-Term Rental bylaw**, that will address standards for Air BnBs and similar operations. I participated in a MassPlanners Webinar on ‘**Tiny Houses**’ in early July that focused on the trend towards smaller living and guidance on developing regulations for this emerging land-use. I have and will continue to research all these topics for eventual warrant articles at a 2021 Town Meeting.

The **Petapawag Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) bylaw** will be developed over the course of this fiscal year and is anticipated to be voted on at the Fall, 2021 Special Town Meeting. This project is one of the high priorities of the Master Plan and is aimed at providing greater protection to Ayer’s last remaining large forest blocks, which are also of high ecological value.

4. Ongoing Projects continuing into October 2020:

- I am still researching the legal and procedural issues related to a **marijuana wholesale delivery business** that a prospective owner / operator of a yet to be approved cultivation facility would like to engage in. This is a new area of State Law overseen by the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC), on which our current Bylaw is silent because such businesses were not included in the original legislation. The CCC is currently in the process of finalizing the regulations as to whether and how such delivery licenses would be permitted and regulated. I am keeping a close watch on developments in this regard.
- I am in the process of planning the approach to a **Build-Out Study of the Form-Based Code districts**, which would determine the approximate number of new residential units and commercial square footage that could be developed in these districts. These numbers in turn could help determine the water and waste-water demand, the number of school-aged children and perhaps most importantly the number of parking spaces that must be provided to make such development viable.

