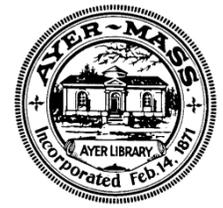


Town of Ayer

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 October 2020
Date: November 20, 2020

1. Project Review and Planning Board meetings:

The Planning Board met remotely on **Tuesdays, October 13, and October 27**, 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. As of this writing, GPR, Inc. has yet to get revised plans for **14 Washington Street** to the Planning Board. This is anticipated to occur in late-November or early December, shortly after which the Planning Board will be able to act on the Plan. The Planning Board is nearing the time when it can act to approve the **Ayer Solar II-B modified Site Plan**, most likely at its November 24, 2020 meeting.

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 potential 40-B project at 76 Fitchburg Road, and an addition at the Catania Oils plant. The Washington Street subdivision will first be submitted as a Preliminary Plan, which affords the Planning Board greater leeway in working out the design of the subdivision with the applicant. On October 13, the Planning Board endorsed a minor Site Plan amendment for Catania Oils to provide a treed buffer along Westford Road in front of their property. The Land-Use Group will be meeting with Catania Oils in November to hear the scope of the proposed addition to this industrial plant.

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 Board also received the results of a study of vehicle turning movements into the **Alltown / Global Montello** site just south of the Carlton Rotary, which was a Condition of Site Plan Approval. The study found, as casual observation confirms, that traffic backups in front of the site are minor and only minimally impact traffic flow in the area. Therefore, a bypass lane is not required in front of the site.

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 and 14 Washington Street, it became apparent that this section of the Bylaw had confusing and ambiguous provisions, with some modifications requiring special permits, others variances and still others which are waivable from the Planning Board.

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 the Fall 2021 Town Meeting.

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 November 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.

