

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 November 2020

Date: December 21, 2020

1. Project Review and Planning Board meetings:

The Planning Board met remotely on **Tuesdays, November 10 and 24**, at which it continued review of the following cases:

At its November 24 meeting, the Planning Board approved the **Ayer Solar II-B modified Site Plan**, after several months of intensive review with the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board. The new plan is substantially similar to the original Ayer Solar II project originally approved in November, 2017, but for a somewhat different road alignment, large culvert, stormwater management facilities and slightly modified solar field itself.

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 of this writing, GPR, Inc. has yet to get revised plans for **14 Washington Street** to the Planning Board. This is now anticipated to occur in early January 2021 now, shortly after which the Planning Board will be able to act on the Plan.

I spent a good deal of time working with the applicant's engineer in getting the application package for a **Preliminary Subdivision Plan on Washington Street**, across from the Ayer-Shirley Regional High School, ready for application to the Planning Board. The Planning Board opened the public meeting for this Preliminary Subdivision plan on December 8, which I mention here as it relates to my work in November.

This plan currently shows 28 single family house lots on a development envelope of about 10 acres, with the remaining 12 acres of the tract towards the back of the property to be preserved as open space. This Plan is still in the early stages of review with the Planning Board, and it is expected to change significantly over the course of review. The Planning Board officially needs to make its final recommendations on the Plan by its January 12 meeting, unless the review period is extended by agreement with the applicant.

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. The Board is currently focused on the Self-Storage Units at 215 and 217 West Main Street, which were approved in 2016 and 2018 respectively.

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.

2. 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.
- I have committed to completing the Open Space Residential Development (**OSRD**) ‘**Design Guidelines**’ with the Conservation Administrator over the next few months.

