

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: February 2021

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

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

Application & Production Process: The AOCED scheduled and conducted an introductory/informational/discussion ZOOM Meeting with the four (4) proposed new members of the Ayer Commission on Disabilities on February 10th. The Dir. of AOCED & Community Development Program Manager have both registered and will attend (remote ZOOM) the Massachusetts 6th Annual Disability Summit on March 4th. The Dir. of AOCED prepared and submitted the names/addresses of the four (4) candidates for the Ayer Commission on Disabilities for requested appointment at the March 2nd Ayer Select Board Meeting. If the four (4) new candidates are successfully appointed – the Ayer Commission on Disabilities will have a full-compliment of five (5) Commission Members for the first time in many years – and ready to re-engage in the important work of this local Commission.

Ayer CDBG-COVID19 Microenterprise Grants: The Dir. of AOCED engaged with two (2) additional members of Ayer's Microenterprise business community – to provide CDBG-CV grant applications, assist with application completion and submission, and to review prospective grant applications to determine eligibility/amount, and if eligible to provide grant funding to mitigate substantial loss of small business revenue directly from the COVID19 State of Emergency since March 2020. Both grant applications were approved with a \$10,000 microenterprise grant being provided to each local Ayer business. As of late February, the AOCED has provided CDBG-CV microenterprise grants to eight (8) Ayer businesses totaling \$67,800.

Ayer “MoRe Rides” Transportation Gaps Project Group: The AOCED scheduled and conducted a ZOOM Meeting with Jonathan Vos of Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) and local Ayer project group members including Becky Jones, Kathleen O'Connor, Nathan King, Karin Swanfeldt, Alicia Hersey, and Dan van Schalkwyck on February 11th. The “MoRe Rides” Transportation Project results from a grant received by the (MRPC) to identify, study, document, and propose feasible objectives and goals in addressing and lessening the “gaps in public transportation” especially for Ayer's senior citizens, physically disabled, employees lacking the means for private transportation. The Project will result in a document (completion scheduled for July 2021) that will support updated understanding/future investment in enhanced public transportation & connectivity resources for Ayer's most vulnerable and at-risk residents.

Proposed Catania Oils TIF Agreement: The Dir of AOCED served on the municipal TIF Team (also including - Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager & Town Assessor) that met with, reviewed, commented, and provided recommendation for the proposed/prospective (TIF) Tax Increment Finance Agreement for the Catania Oils \$14 million plant expansion at Ayer's Industrial District off Westford Rd. The municipal TIF Team met with Catania Oils representatives in early February. Catania Oils representatives conducted an informational presentation at the Feb. 18th Ayer Select Board (SB) Meeting, and the Ayer municipal TIF Team met again with Catania Oils team on Feb. 25th following the SB Meeting to further negotiate the TIF proposal.

Park Street (FBC/Traditional Downtown Street) Transformation Project: The AOCED in partnership with Ayer Dept. of Public Works prepared and submitted a Housing Choice Capital Grant application in the amount of \$108,000 on December 11th. The AOCED awaits the announcement of the Grant awardees with cautious optimism – announcements scheduled for early/mid-March.

\$3.1 Million MassWorks Grant – West Main Street Corridor: The Dir. of AOCED is actively meeting (on a weekly basis) with Ayer DPW staff and civil engineering consultants GPR Inc. to advance the engineering & construction design/plans of the \$4.0 million West Main Street/West Ayer Village Public Infrastructure Improvement Project (funded by a \$3.1 million MassWorks Grant). The Dir. of AOCED will be personally meeting with all private property-owners within the project boundaries of the West Main Street Project late in March and early April to thoroughly review the construction impact of the project and to secure agreement/consensus on the physical integration of the project with each private property. The Dir. of AOCED will then (in April/May) schedule and conduct a series of Public/Community Engagement Sessions/ZOOM Meetings & Walking Tours of the project site and project design for full-community input. The Project is scheduled to begin in July/August 2021.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC)

The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC) held a Public Information session on February 24th at which they reviewed the Ayer Housing Trust Bylaws and received comment from the public regarding the first draft. A second public input session will be held on March 24th at 7:00 pm. The AAHC anticipates bringing the Ayer Housing Trust Bylaws to Spring Town Meeting for approval. The Committee reviewed the final draft of the Ayer Housing Production Plan (HPP) and plan to present it to a joint meeting of the Select Board and Planning Board for approval on March 2nd.

FY19 CDBG-CV Grant

FY19-CDBG-CV social service grant programs are moving forward. The Ayer Library Internet Access program now has internet hot spots and laptops available for loan. The Stone Soup Kitchen Food Pantry has used the balance of their funds. The other three social service programs, Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry, COA Meals Delivery Program and Nashoba Associated Boards of Health have not yet started using their grant funds.

Micro Enterprise Business Loans grant program has continued, and the Office of Community and Economic Development awarded two grants for local small businesses in the month of February.