

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 February 2021

Date: March 22, 2021

1. Project Review and Planning Board meetings:

The Planning Board met remotely on **Tuesdays, February 9 and 23**, at which it reviewed the following cases:

John Carroll Reserve – Covenant and Surety:

I spent considerable time in February, with assistance from the Town Treasurer, in working with the new owner of the John Carroll Reserve subdivision on Littleton Road to secure a Covenant and Tri-Party agreement to insure completion of the necessary site work. The Planning Board ratified these documents at its February 23 meeting. The Planning Department and Planning Board will be taking a more active role in setting up and monitoring these performance guarantees in the future, a role which in the past fell more heavily on the Department of Public Works.

“Panther Place” Preliminary (OSRD) Subdivision, Washington Street:

At its January 26 meeting, the Planning Board voted to ‘**Approve with Modifications**’, the **Preliminary Subdivision Plan on Washington Street**, across from the Ayer-Shirley Regional High School. Starting at its February 23 meeting, the Planning Board has been considering the applicants’ request for extra lots, which can be issued via **Special Permit** at the approval of the Planning Board according to the ‘Density Bonus’ provisions of the Open Space Residential Development section of the Bylaw. They are requesting seven (7) lots in addition to the base number of nineteen (19) approved in the Preliminary Subdivision. To get these, they are proposing deeded public access to the open space, 5% additional open space over the minimum required and lots that are ‘solar energy oriented’ with ‘solar-ready construction’. This Special Permit hearing was continued into March.

Upcoming applications:

The **McDonalds** on the Carlton Rotary will be before the Planning Board for Site Plan and Special Permit applications starting on March 5. In addition to a complete rehabilitation of the building, site work is anticipated that will improve customer access and shorten lines to the drive-up windows. Foremost concerns will be traffic impacts and circulation both on and off-site, especially for the Carlton Rotary. The Town Planner is gearing up to prepare a request for proposals for a Peer-Review Traffic Impact and Mitigation Study to enable the Planning Board to make the most informed decisions possible. I spent considerable time in February starting review of the application.

Catania Spagna Oils will be coming before the Planning Board in March for review of a Site Plan for a major addition and site work, as well as a Special Permit since this work takes place in the Aquifer Overlay District. They submitted their Site Plan and Special Permit applications in February at which time I began my review and began coordinating peer-review prior to the first PB meeting on the case.

2. Ongoing Projects continuing into February 2021:

- In late-February I completed and submitted a **District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grant application** for 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. **We learned in early-March that this project was approved by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)**, who will be assisting a special working group at Town Hall in developing the build-out study over this calendar year.
- In February I also started scoping out a future study group to complete the Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) Design Guidelines and Regulations. More on this process will be forthcoming in my next Staff Report.

3. Zoning Bylaw amendments:

As part of my 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, other 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. These amendments will be brought before the Fall 2021 Town Meeting.

The **Petapawag Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) bylaw** will be developed over the course of this 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.

