

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development Monthly Report: May 2021

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

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

Application & Production Process: On May 13th the four (4) new members of the Ayer Commission on Disabilities conducted an informal/new-member introductory session on the ZOOM remote meeting platform. Dir. of AOCED provided an update on the ongoing production of the new Town of Ayer ADA Self Evaluation & Transition Plan. Commission members engaged in general dialogue and discussed preparations for upcoming formal meetings, general process for nominations/elections of new Commission officers, considerations for reviewing the Commission mission statement/goals etc., and future meeting schedules. The Dir. of AOCED continues to work directly with MRPC staff consultants, Ayer Building Commissioner, and other municipal departments in the production of the new ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan. The AOCED is currently formulating a municipal department ADA survey form & a general public ADA survey document for release in early June. The AOCED will schedule & conduct an inter-municipal department ADA Plan forum in early June. The AOCED will schedule a DRAFT Plan review session at the June Ayer Select Board Meeting. The updated municipal ADA Plan is due for final submission to the Massachusetts Office on Disabilities (MOD) by June 30th 2021. The AOCED will schedule and conduct ZOOM Public Review & Comment Sessions for the new municipal DRAFT ADA Plan in the month of May and early June.

Park Street (FBC/Traditional Downtown Street) Transformation Project/Housing

Choice Capital Grant: On May 7th, the AOCED scheduled and conducted a Park Street Transformation Project update meeting between the AOCED and Ayer DPW staff at the DPW office building. The contractual requirements, (dates, deadlines, milestones, reporting submissions, funding sources, etc.) of the recently awarded \$108,000 MA Capital Choice Housing Grant for the Park Street Project was reviewed and discussed. The project Workplan & Budget were prepared for 1st quarterly report due for submission to MA DHCD. Ayer DPW will be issuing the RFPs for qualified design engineering firms for the Park Street Project; RFP responses will be submitted and reviewed in early June – with selection of firm by late June/early July.

New Restaurant Operators at former Carlin's Restaurant in Depot Square: In May, the Dir. of AOCED met with the new restaurant operators of the former Carlin's Restaurant. The owner of Carlin's has decided to permanently close Carlin's Restaurant, having been a part of Downtown Ayer since the 1930s. The new restaurant operators are leasing the long-time restaurant space in Depot Square. The new operators are the Bobola Family, who have a long and proven record of operating successful eateries in Lowell MA, Dracut MA, Nashua NH &

Milford NH. The restaurant will have a new name – and will launch in the summer of 2021. The Dir. of AOCE met with the new restaurant operators with the building owner at the restaurant location in May to welcome them to Downtown Ayer and the Ayer community.

MA Shared Streets & Spaces Grant Project Prospecting: The Dir. of AOCED launched an effort in May to consider pursuing a MA Shared Streets & Spaces Grant for Downtown Ayer/Rail Trail. On Saturday May 15th the Dir. of AOCED scheduled, promoted and conducted two (2) Ayer Rail Trail Public Design Walking Tours at and around the new Commuter Parking Deck & Main Street. A bicycle maintenance station amenity, new wayfinding signage, additional safety amenities, etc. were considered, however following the Design Tours and follow-up assessment, the Dir. of AOCED determined that it was premature to submit a grant application, as extensive fully-integrated location pre-design work need to be completed before the proposed new amenities could be introduced into the public space. A good process of grant investigation & public space design considerations – the AOCED will proceed with more integrated public space design enhancements for the Commuter Parking Deck/Rail Trail/Main Street district.

\$3.1 Million MassWorks Grant – West Main Street Corridor: During the month of May the AOCED continues to work in partnership with the Ayer DPW and the civil engineering firm of GPR, Inc. of Ayer to produce and deliver a 75% design & engineering plans for (outer) the West Main Street corridor – known as the future “West Ayer Village” by mid-June. The engineering/design plan will be packaged and issued for the Project RFP document by early July. The Dir. of AOCED is now preparing to formulate, schedule and conduct a series of West Ayer Village Project public informational forums & walking tours for the month of July. The transformative and comprehensive public infrastructure improvement & Smart Growth project will serve as the foundation for the incremental emergence of “West Ayer Village”.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC)

On May 4th, the Ayer Select Board appointed the three at large members of the Ayer Affordable Housing Trust, Cyndi Lavin, Jake Driscoll, and Jennifer Cali. The Ayer Select Board also appointed the Planning Board representative, Geoffrey Tillotson, the Select Board representative, Shaun Copeland and the Community Preservation Committee representative, Colleen Krieser.

The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC) monthly meeting was held on May 27th. The AAHC had received an application for the open seat on the committee from James Stephen. After reviewing Mr. Stephen's application and briefly interviewed him they voted unanimously to request the Select Board to appoint Mr. Stephen to the Ayer Affordable Housing Committee.

The State Department of Housing and Community Development, (DHCD) approved the Ayer Housing Production Plan on May 25, 2021.

FY19 CDBG-CV Grant

FY19-CDBG-CV Social Service Grant Programs are in their third quarter; the grant runs through December 2021. The Ayer Library Internet Access program currently has internet hot spots and laptops available for loan. The Stone Soup Kitchen Food Pantry has used the balance of their funds. Loaves and Fishes has started using their grant funds to offset costs of food to stock the pantry. The other two social service programs, COA Meals Delivery Program and Nashoba Associated Boards of Health have not yet started using their grant funds. The CDBG-CV Micro Enterprise Business Grant program is winding down and the department plans to closeout this portion of the grant in the coming month.