

# Town of Ayer

## Office of the Town Planner



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Town of Ayer | Ayer Town Hall | 1 Main Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor | Ayer, MA 01432 | 978-772-8218 | [www.ayer.ma.us](http://www.ayer.ma.us)

### Monthly Staff Report

To: Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager

From: Mark Archambault, Ayer Town Planner

Re: Monthly report for May 2021

Date: June 21, 2021

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#### 1. Project Review and Planning Board meetings:

The Planning Board met remotely on **Wednesday, May 12 and Tuesday, May 25**, at which it reviewed the following cases:

##### Catania-Spagna Oils:

At its May 12 meeting, the Planning Board approved a Special Permit application for construction in the aquifer protection overlay district, and Site Plan approval for a 51,480 sq.ft. building to expand Catania-Spagna's bottling operations on site. Along with the building addition, parking lot improvements and site circulations layout changes are proposed, as well as a new underground stormwater infiltration and detention system.

##### Shaker Mill Pond Subdivision – Covenant and Surety:

At its May 25 meeting, the Planning Board moved to accept the Covenant and Surety arrangement for the Shaker Mill Pond subdivision as drafted by the developer's attorney and as reviewed by Ayer Town Counsel.

##### McDonalds at 2 Sandy Pond Road off the Carlton Rotary:

Also at its May 25 meeting, the Planning Board approved the Special Permit application for an additional drive-thru aisle and Site Plan approval for interior and exterior renovations to the building, and a 67 sq.ft building addition to accommodate the new drive thru payment window. Other improvements include ADA accessible features including replacement of existing concrete walkways and ramps, including an accessible sidewalk connection to the Town sidewalk, modifications to the existing parking layout and associated grading modification.

As a condition of Site Plan approval, McDonalds agrees to construct an ADA compliant sidewalk, with curbing, in accordance with Ayer DPW and other applicable standards, on Sandy Pond Road between the easterly and westerly site entrances prior to any Certificate of Completion / Occupancy being issued for new construction on the site.

#### “Panther Place” Definitive Subdivision Plan:

At its May 25 meeting, the Planning Board opened the public hearing for a 26-lot definitive subdivision proposed across from the Ayer-Shirley Regional High School on Washington Street. The Planning Board had approved a Preliminary Plan for the same earlier in the spring. The total tract area being subdivided is approximately 21 acres, with 11 contiguous acres of open space to be preserved at the north end of the tract, behind the development envelope with the homes as seen from Washington Street. Deeded public access to the open space will be provided.

#### ANR’s:

The Planning Board endorsed an ANR plan at 37 Sandy Pond Road, adjusting the lot line between two lots with pre-existing homes.

### **2. Ongoing Projects continuing into April 2021:**

OSRD Working Group: In May I continued research into developing **Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) Design Guidelines and Regulations** to better clarify ambiguities in the Ayer Zoning Bylaw and address design considerations which aim to result in better subdivision design. A special working group was formed that will be meeting via Zoom on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of the month. The group consists of two Planning Board members, the Conservation Administrator, the Fire Inspector and Town Planner. The goal is to develop a set of Design Guidelines and Regulations that the Planning Board can adopt after public hearing, which will be included as an addendum to the Ayer Subdivision Regulations.

Form-Based Code Build-Out Study: You will recall that the Town of Ayer was awarded a DLTA Technical Assistance Grant to assist the Town a build-out study of the Downtown / Park Street FBC district. In April, the MRPC prepared a scope of work and agreement with the Town. The build-out study will determine the likely number of apartments, the parking demand from such and other numerical factors that will enable the Town to better plan for and manage development under the Form-Based Code. As of this writing in June, the project has yet to commence, but should very soon.

### **3. Land-Use Meetings in May 2021:**

At the May, 2021 Land-Use meetings (*department head and staff meetings to review prospective applications before the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and ZBA*) the Land-Use team continued to discuss the development review projects currently before and anticipated over the summer and fall, and how to best coordinate review between departments. As part of this effort, I developed a project tracking spreadsheet that, when coupled with project management software under consideration, will help to facilitate communications between departments in the busy period ahead.

#### 4. **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** is planned to be developed over the course of this summer and fall and is anticipated to be voted on at the October, 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.