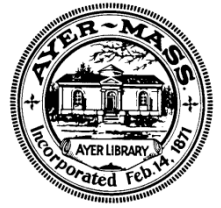


Town of Ayer

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 June 2021

Date: July 20, 2021

1. Project Review and Planning Board meetings:

The Planning Board met remotely on **Wednesday, June 8 and Tuesday, June 22**, at which it reviewed the following cases:

“Panther Place” Definitive Subdivision Plan:

At its June meetings, the Planning Board continued 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. At these meetings, the Planning Board worked with the applicant to better identify the large trees that can be saved during construction, discussed the sidewalk and crosswalk which will provide pedestrian connection to the High School, the stormwater management system, homeowners association document and performance guarantee. The Planning Board continued the public hearing to its July 13 meeting at which approval of the Plan is anticipated.

Stratton Hill Definitive Subdivision Plan (*Planner review of application prior to public hearing*):

The Town Planner spent considerable time in June reviewing the application package and plans submitted for consideration of a Definitive Subdivision Plan for 39 house lots on the ‘Stratton Hill’ property off Wright Road. This will be the largest and most complex OSRD subdivision that the Ayer Planning Board will be reviewing since Pingry Hill. The Planning Board will be opening the public hearing for this project at their July 27 meeting.

ANR’s:

The Planning Board endorsed an ANR plan at 4 Pierce Avenue, creating two parcels out of one.

2. Ongoing Projects continuing into June 2021:

OSRD Working Group: In June 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 2nd and 4th 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.

In late June, the Community Development Director and I met with the MRPC's GIS Director to fine-tune the mapping process that will be a first step in this process. We will be spending considerable time in July and August analyzing each lot within the study area to determine how it might be developed under the Form-Based Code standards.

Land-Use Meetings in June 2021:

At the June, 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.

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** 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.

