

The Ayer Library
Director's Report for July 2021

The Ayer Library building reopened to the public on Tuesday, June 15th!

We are pleased to welcome the community back into the building for browsing, public computer use, study room use, and just sitting and reading!

Current operations:

- We have returned to our pre-pandemic operating schedule as follows:
 - Tuesday- Thursday 10 AM – 8 PM, Friday 10 AM- 5 PM, Saturday 10 AM – 2 PM
- We are requesting that all patrons (and staff) continue to wear masks when inside the building in order to protect the health of our patrons who may be immuno-compromised and for those under 12 who cannot yet be vaccinated.
- We continue to offer curbside pickup service via the Curbside Shed. The default pickup location for requested items is the Main Desk once again. Please call us to have your requested items placed in the shed.
- The Friends' Book Sale Cart has been retired from curbside service now that the Book Sale Room on the Ground Floor is open once again.
- The Reading Room in the historic wing of the building remains closed to the public while we wait for the resolution of our insurance claim and the repair of the plaster ceiling that partially collapsed in May.
- Summer Reading and other programs remain virtual for the time being.

July Updates

- Curbside orders picked up: 81
- Adult Creative Crafting: Paper Bunting Kit
- Spice of the Month: BBQ Rub mix
- Adult Programming: The Library hosted a Zoom program on July 13th with felt crafter Rachel Benson. 13 participants created cute felt otters or otter-like creatures.
- East Main Street Construction Project: Work continues on this MassDOT-funded and managed project to excavate and replace buried utilities and rebuild East Main Street's travel lanes and sidewalks between East Street and the bridge. This will be a tremendous improvement once finished, however:
 - This work is expected to continue on and off through the remainder of the calendar year and will likely make accessing the Library difficult or impossible at times.
 - The Library has asked to be notified in advance of such work in future weeks and months. We will pass along any information that we receive.
 - Library patrons may park at the Ayer District Courthouse if the Library's parking lot is inaccessible. No parking pass or notification is required.
- The Library closed on Saturday, July 3rd, in recognition of Independence Day.
- Behind the Scenes:
 - Personnel
 - We are pleased to announce that Library Clerk Keith Ugles has been promoted to the position of Circulation Librarian and that Ayer resident Heidi Flynn has been hired as a second Circulation Librarian. These hires fill two

The Ayer Library

Director's Report for July 2021

vacant positions, one of which had been vacant since February of 2020. Keith has gone from library volunteer to part-time Library Clerk in December of 2018 and now to full-time work. Heidi comes to us from the Conant Public Library in Sterling where she's worked in a variety of positions since 2015. Her first day here in Ayer was Thursday, July 29th.

- Programs & Services
 - The Library and the Ayer Community Garden re-started a discussion about hosting a "seed library" in the building for local gardeners.
- Maintenance & Repair
 - Heavy rain in early July unfortunately resulted in leaks reappearing in the ceiling above the Library's Main Floor. Buckets were deployed to catch the drips, which, fortunately, didn't appear over any of the bookshelves, computers, or other sensitive items. One study table had to be moved. The Library's current asphalt shingle and rubber membrane roof was installed when the building was renovated and expanded in the mid-1990s and is reaching the end of its expected lifespan. It has also has suffered wind damage in recent winters as indicated by exposed patches on the roof and pieces of shingles scattered around the Library grounds. There is a placeholder for roof replacement in the Library's 5-year Capital Budget plan for FY2024 but, in the meantime, Facilities Director Chuck Shultz will have a contractor do some patching and sealing work to try to minimize the leaking.
 - Heavy rain was also partly responsible for the Library's phone service being rendered inoperable from Thursday, July 8th through Thursday, July 15th. Verizon's phone lines under East Main Street were damaged by the reconstruction work and the heavy rain made accessing the underground lines difficult.
 - The Town's insurance provider sent an engineer to examine the damage to the plaster ceiling in the Library's Reading Room on July 13th. No word yet on a timetable for repair.
 - Electrician Henry Renaud came to the Library on July 15th to replace ballasts and/or repair several failed light fixtures, including one of the light poles outside the building.
 - Outlook Security began work to upgrade the Library's security system on July 19th. After replacing the system circuit board and the keypad controls at the entrances and reprogramming the new system, the technicians discovered evidence of faults in about a half-dozen of the motion detectors. This may be part of the reason why we seem to have frequent false alarms. The system is operational, but Lookout Security will return next month to replace the deteriorating sensors.
 - Three participants in the Ayer DPW Youth Works program – Andrew B. Cole H. and Joseph C. - visited the Library on Friday, July 23rd. They spent the morning pulling weeds out of the planting beds and cleaning up detritus in the parking lot. Many thanks to them and to supervisors Joyce and Steve

The Ayer Library

Director's Report for July 2021

who also helped out. The property looked a lot better cared for after they were done.

Library Director's Activities:

- I attended the Town of Ayer Department Heads meeting on July 14th in-person at Town Hall.
- I finished annual performance evaluations for Assistant Director Samantha Benoit, Head of Adult Services Barbara Cheeks, and Head of Youth Services Amy Leonard over the first week of July.
- Samantha and I attended a Zoom training hosted by the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners on July 7th to review the changes to this year's Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS). The start of the new fiscal year means that it's time for all Massachusetts libraries to report usage statistics from the past year to the MBLC. From the MBLC website: *The MBLC administers the Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) and Financial Report in compliance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 78. Each fiscal year, public libraries are required to submit this data in order to receive State Aid to Public Libraries and to meet the Minimum Standards of Public Library Service.* Some of this information is also reported to the national Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which provides grant funding to states for library services. The deadline to complete the ARIS is August 27th.
- I had Zoom meetings with two separate consultants to discuss ways to improve the Library's personnel policies and to provide training for staff development. If there's one thing that the pandemic has demonstrated a need for it's more and better tools and skills for dealing with people who are working under a lot of stress and uncertainty.
- The Ayer Library Board of Trustees met in person at the Library on Thursday, July 15th. The Trustees voted to appoint Rebecca Myers to a seat on the Board. Rebecca will serve until the next Town election at which point she will have the opportunity to run for election to a full three-year term. The Board still has one vacant seat (out of nine), so Ayer residents interested in serving as a Library Trustee should reach out to a current Board member or the Library Director to find out more about the position.
- Strategic Planning:
 - With the data gathering work wrapped up, planning consultant Barbara Alevras worked to summarize the results and to highlight information and issues that were significant to a large number of survey respondents and focus group participants. We met via telephone on July 13th to review progress and prepare for the final Advisory Committee meeting.
 - The Strategic Planning Advisory Committee met for the third and final time on July 19th to review the summaries of the public survey and focus groups and participated in a SOAR visioning exercise facilitated by Barbara.
- Samantha Benoit and I attended the Friends of the Ayer Library's quarterly meeting on July 21st, held in-person at the Library.
- On Monday, July 26th I attended a meeting at the Ayer DPW offices with MassDOT staff overseeing the East Main Street Project and DPW Director Mark Wetzels, Police Chief

The Ayer Library
Director's Report for July 2021

Brian Gill, Fire Chief Tim Johnston, Town Engineer Dan Van Schalkwyk, and others. The goal of the meeting was to go over the current timeline of the work still pending and to discuss potential issues such as parking for area residents when the new sidewalks are being poured. As of the date of the meeting, MassDOT was hopeful that the bulk of the roadwork and sidewalk reconstruction would be complete by the end of the year. Some work, such as tree planting, is already scheduled for next year, and some of the final paving work may also need to be scheduled for next year as well.

- I met with Brendan Mahoney of Able Landscapers on July 27th to request an estimate on some additional landscaping work. Several of the ornamental trees outside the Library are in need of pruning, and several shrubs and one other ornamental tree are dead or nearly so and will need to be removed. Poison ivy is growing along the base of the chain link fence on the north side of the parking lot, some of which is close to the picnic tables and the Children's Room entrance, and should be removed as well.

My thanks to Amy Leonard, Barbara Cheeks, Samantha Benoit, and the rest of the Ayer Library staff for their contributions to this report.

Respectfully,

Tim Silva
Library Director