

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 July 2021

Date: August 20, 2021

1. Project Review and Planning Board meetings:

The Planning Board met live, in person, on **Tuesdays July 13 and 27**, at which it reviewed the following cases:

“Panther Place” Definitive Subdivision Plan:

At its July 13 meeting, the Planning Board approved the definitive subdivision plan for a 26-lot open space residential development (OSRD) subdivision at 0 Washington Street, across from the High School. The Planning Board also approved concurrent Site Plan and Stormwater Management Permits, which are part of the overall project application. The subdivision approval is subject to a thorough set of general and special conditions. Nearly half of the entire tract, about 11 acres of mature hardwood forest, was preserved as open space. A trail network will eventually be constructed by the owner / applicant.

Stratton Hill Definitive Subdivision Plan

At its July 27 meeting, the Planning Board opened the public hearing for a Definitive Subdivision Plan for 36 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 discussed its preliminary concerns with the applicant, most relating to traffic impacts and impacts to the environmentally sensitive area north of the powerline easement. The entire subdivision is located within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and priority habitat according to Mass. Fish and Wildlife. Given these considerations, the Planning Board anticipates hiring outside consultants to conduct a traffic impact and mitigation study, and perhaps environmental studies related to development adjacent to a large intact forest block and Long Pond.

Many abutters from the greater Wright Road neighborhood attended the meeting to express their concerns. Most of these related to traffic impacts, the condition of the road network and its ability to handle the extra traffic, and environmental concerns given the unique pristine nature of this forest. The Planning Board will work closely with abutters to identify and resolve concerns throughout the project review process.

60 Central Avenue, Site Plan for multi-family structure:

This project is proposing to raze an existing multi-family structure at 60 Central Avenue and replace it with a new **four-unit Condominium, Townhouse-style multi-family structure**. The site contains extensive ledge outcrops, which will require more intensive engineering study by the applicant before the DPW and Planning Board can proceed to act on the application. The Planning Board continued the public meeting for this case to its August 10 and 24 meetings.

2. Ongoing Projects continuing into July 2021:

Form-Based Code Build-Out Study: Earlier this year, 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. 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 July I was able to develop and fill in a spreadsheet to submit to the GIS Director at the MRPC to enable him to calculate the build-out. The Director of Community and Economic Development assisted me in identifying which lots are most likely to undergo redevelopment under the Form-Based Code zoning. Work on this project will continue into August and September as coordination with the MRPC will be necessary to provide the most accurate results.

Land-Use Meetings in July 2021:

At the July, 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 remainder of the summer and fall, and how to best coordinate review between departments.

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.

