

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: December 2021

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

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

Choice Capital Grant: This important Downtown Ayer traditional/walkable street and new housing development opportunity design project funded by a (2021) \$108,000 MA Housing Choice Capital Grant award is scheduled for contractual completion by June 2022. Updated engineering surveys are completed; preliminary street/sidewalk designs have been produced; integration with the (2019) Downtown Ayer/Park Street Form-Based Zoning Code is finalized. The project team is now scheduling & conducting direct design review/cost estimate production meetings with regional Public Utility companies (National Grid/Version/etc.) for proposed removal of street utility poles & “undergrounding” of overhead wires along the project boundaries on Park Street. The Dir. of AOCED will organize, schedule and conduct a Project Progress Public Informational ZOOM Forum in February 2022. The Dir. of AOCED will prepare & submit the FY22 2nd Qtr. (Oct-Dec 2021) Housing Choice Capital Grant Quarterly Project Report to our DHCD grant administrator in January.

The Downtown Ayer “Winter Holiday Candlelight Stroll & Tree Lighting

Ceremony” a Great Success: The AOCED is pleased to report that on Saturday evening, December 4th the Downtown Ayer “Winter Holiday Candlelight Stroll & Tree Lighting Ceremony” was successfully conducted. The weather conditions proved most favorable (no wind/not too cold/clear). Since the introduction of “The Stroll” in 2016, this year proved to be the largest gathering of Main Street Strollers ever! The new introduction of the Nashoba Valley Concert Band playing at the front of Historic Ayer Town Hall for the arrival of the Candlelight Strollers & Tree Lighting “Countdown” Ceremony proved to be a crowd favorite – and we hope to make that a new tradition going forward with this very special local community event. Santa Claus & Mrs. Claus led the Strollers up Main Street and led the Big Countdown to the Holiday Tree Lighting at Town Hall. Thanks to Assistant Town Manager Carly Antonellis for the magnificent production of the Downtown Winter Holiday Lights & the Grand Town of Ayer Holiday Tree Lighting. The Downtown Ayer Winter Holiday festivities continued with the return of the now beloved Downtown Ayer Winter Holiday Ice Sculptures at the front of Historic Ayer Town Hall. On Saturday evening, December 18th, under the most unfavorable of weather conditions (for Ice Sculpture Installation & Viewing), with driving rain/freezing rain, the legendary Ice Breakers, Dave Soha & Dennis Hickey, heroically installed the famous “Ayer Locomotive Engine Ice Sculpture”, the wow-factor “Ayer 150th Birthday Cake Ice Sculpture”, and thanks to our three generous private business sponsors, Ayer Family Pharmacy, Central Ave. Compassionate Care, and Nashoba Park Assisted Living – the “Teddy Bear”, the “Bells & Holly” and the “Snowflake” Ice Sculptures graced the front grounds of Ayer Town Hall. It was a perfect night in the hometown for all! Get ready for next year.

\$3.1 Million MassWorks Grant – West Main Street Corridor Public Infrastructure

Improvement Project: The Project Pre-Construction Team Meeting was scheduled and conducted on December 8th at Ayer DPW Office. Representatives of Onyx Construction Corp., Devens Enterprise Commission, and MassDevelopment joined with Ayer municipal officials to engage in project plans and deployment scheduled for March 2022. All Ayer municipal project permits have been secured. Onyx Corp. has been issued municipal trench opening, water connection and road opening construction permits. Final shop drawings are under final review for approval by Ayer DPW. The landmark “Smart Growth” public infrastructure project design to function in accordance with the (2019) West Ayer Village Form-Based Zoning Code to deliver a vibrant, livable, walkable, new mixed-use place – known as West Ayer Village.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC) & Ayer Affordable Housing Trust

(AAHT): The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust and the AOCED presented the Ayer Rental Assistance Program to the Select Board at their December 7th meeting. The Select Board proposed questions then offered their unanimous support of the program. Municipal legal council’s review of the Ayer Rental Assistance Guidelines came back later in the month with minor changes. The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC) and the Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT) scheduled and conducted a meeting on December 8th. Both the Committee and Trust reviewed the proposed rental assistance program guidelines for Ayer, changes were proposed with a goal to have a final draft ready for review at the January meeting with a start date in mid-January. The AAHT and AAHC started the process of reviewing Tax Title properties and municipal-owned properties for possible sites for new/expanded affordable housing.

Devenscrest Apartments Evictions: It was reported at the December 7th meeting of the AAHT and AAHC that State funds for legal assistance have been procured by State Senator Jamie Eldridge office to help the Devenscrest residents in their eviction fight.

FY19 CDBG-CV Grant : AOCED continues to support their FY19 CDBG-CV grant program. The extension submitted to DHCD has been amended to a 6-month extension. Ayer Library Internet Access program continues to offer Hotspots and Laptops for loan to residents that do not have access to a computer or an internet connection in their homes. Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry continues to provide Ayer and adjoining communities with their food assistance program, supplemented through funds from the CDBG-CV grant program. The Ayer Council On Aging (COA) has implemented a congregate meal program for our seniors with their CDBG-CV grant funds. This congregate meal program addresses two issues within our senior community during this period of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The issues are personal isolation and food insecurity; with this new program we are able to provide healthy community meals in a safe and welcoming environment.

Ayer Emergency Housing Rehabilitation Program

The AOCED has successfully processed an emergency application for a qualifying Ayer LMI resident to replace their failed roof. The funds to do this rehabilitation are coming out of Program Income as directed by the Ayer Select Board.