

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: January 2022

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 design project - funded by a (2021) \$108,000 MA Housing Choice Capital Grant award is scheduled for contractual completion by June 2022. 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. A public utility companies Project Site Walk of Park Street will be scheduled and conducted in mid-February. The Dir. of AOCED will prepared & submitted the FY22 2nd Qtr. (Oct-Dec 2021) Housing Choice Capital Grant Quarterly Project Report to our DHCD grant administrator on January 15th.

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

The Project is scheduled for construction start in mid-March 2022. The official Project Sign has been fabricated and is ready for installation. The landmark “Smart Growth” public infrastructure project deign 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. The Dir. of AOCED prepared and submitted the MassWorks Grant FY22 2nd Quarter Report on January 18th.

New Mandatory MBTA Communities Zoning:

The Dir. Of AOCED attended the “MBTA Communities Zoning” Webinar conducted by the MA Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development on Jan. 12th. ON Jan. 11th, the Dir. of AOCED formulated, produced and distributed a Town of Ayer zoning/geo-spatial analysis of Ayer’s two Form-Based Code Zoning Districts (for review & comment) to Ayer Planning Board members and municipal staff relative to the new MA MBTA Communities Zoning mandate.

Kiddie Junction Playground/Area Re-Development Project:

Re-Design/Re-Development of Kiddie Junction Playground Project: The Dir. of AOCED formulated, composed and submitted a comprehensive “Ayer Community Engagement” Process outline for the Ayer Parks Commission and Kiddie Junction Project Team on Jan. 4th. The comprehensive “Community Engagement” Process is required for competitive application to various federal/state/private grant funding sources and programs.

Devens/Ayer MVP Pocket Forest Grant Project: The Dir. of AOCED has been working in partnership with colleagues from Devens Enterprise Commission and the environmental/design consulting firm of BSC Group to formulate a conceptual grant

application that would deliver one (1) to two (2) “Pocket Forests” in the area of Downtown Ayer and at Devens. The proposed (conceptual) locations may include the Downtown Ayer MBTA Commuter Rail Station/Depot Square Park, as well as, on Shirley Street in and around the large St. Mary’s Church asphalt surface parking lot. Dir. of AOCED conducted a site walk with Devens partners and with Father Desrosiers of St. Mary’s Church in January.

Comprehensive Downtown Ayer Main Street/Sidewalk Re-Design/Re-Construction Project (Federal TIP Grant): On January 19th, the Dir. of AOCED organized, scheduled and conducted a Downtown Ayer Main Street Site Walk with the Chiefs of Ayer PD & FD, and Supt. of Ayer Public Works to better coordinate our municipal design position/approach for the \$4+ million (Federal TIP Grant) proposal and preliminary Main Street design plan. Also, on Jan. 19th, the Dir. of AOCED attended and represented the Town of Ayer at the monthly Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MPO) meeting at which project funding is scheduled and approved. The Town of Ayer’s project score is relatively low (compared to other communities) – the project score needs to be elevated and accelerated.

Devens Jurisdictional Framework Committee – Consultant RFI Sub-Committee: On Jan. 27th, the Dir. of AOCED attended and represented the Town of Ayer on the “Consultant RFI Sub-Committee” – (RFI meaning “Request For Information”). Ed Starzec of MassDevelopment composed and presented the 1st draft of the proposed Consultant RFI document with members of the RFI Sub-Committee offering review, comment and discussion. Starzec will re-draft with benefit of Sub-Committee comments and will submit 2nd draft for final review at February meeting.

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

The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust and the AOCED launched the new Town of Ayer Rental Assistance Program (ARAP). This important newly created program will provide monthly rental assistance to five (5) Ayer families. Application deadline is Monday, February 28th. The AAHT is preparing an application to request local Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding for the ARAP for 2023. The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee, (AAHC) is continuing their review of municipal-owned land and Tax Title properties.

Devenscrest Apartments Evictions:

The AOCED met with both Atty. Connie Sullivan and Tara Fredrick, (representative of Devenscrest Tenants Association) the first week of January. Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Fredrick confirmed that the \$250,000 grant from the State will be used for legal expenses to fight the ongoing evictions.

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, ending June 30, 2022. 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 serve Ayer and adjoining communities with their food assistance program, supplemented through funds from the CDBG-CV grant program. The 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 Covid 19. The issues are isolation and food insecurity, with this new program we are able to provide healthy community meals in a safe environment.

Ayer Emergency Housing Rehabilitation Program:

The Emergency Housing Rehabilitation project, in the amount of approx. \$15,000, referenced in last month's report has been completed. A new roof for the residential property has been installed and final project paperwork is being executed.