

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: February 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/consulting team scheduled the “Park Street Public Utilities Companies Joint Site Tour” for Thursday, February 17th; the Site Tour was cancelled and rescheduled for Thursday, March 3rd. The project proposes to work 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.

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

Improvement Project: The Project is scheduled for construction start in late-March 2022 with the break in the winter season weather. The official Project Sign has been fabricated and is ready for installation. 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. The Project is contractually required to be 100% completed by May 2023; 75% project completion is scheduled for October 2022.

Prospective New Mixed-Use Development - West Ayer Village: On February 2nd the AOCED, the Ayer Town Planner and representatives of the Ayer Planning Board met with representatives of a development group with their architect expressing interest in the design and construction of a new multi-story mixed-use building the new West Ayer Village Form-Based Code District. The meeting involved a discussion of the purpose and intent of the West Ayer Village Form-Based Code, the municipal vision for West Ayer Village, and discussion of conceptual site and building design approaches. The development group will further develop a site concept, and if interested in proceeding, the AOCED will schedule and conduct follow-up meetings with municipal team.

Kiddie Junction Playground/Area Re-Development Project: In February, the Ayer Parks Commission requested the Dir. of AOCED to proceed with organizing, scheduling, promoting and participating-in a Kiddie Junction Playground “Public Input & Ideas Site Tour” event for early March (as advised by the Dir. AOCED). The “Public Input & Ideas Site Tour” is scheduled for Saturday, March 5th at 11:00AM at Pirone Park. Also, the Ayer Parks Commission requested the AOCED to structure and integrate the Re-Imagine Kiddie Junction Playground Survey Questions formulated by the Ayer Parks Commission into a “Survey Monkey” Program platform – and to issue the Public Survey for the first week of March; this important project task was completed by the Community Development Program Manager.

Downtown Ayer Delegation Tour of Indian Hill Music Center at Groton: The Dir. of AOCED contacted the Ex. Director of the (soon-to-open) Indian Hill Music Center at Groton to develop & establish partnerships and working relations between the world-class new performance destination in Groton and Downtown Ayer as a dining/social/cultural destination place. Dir. of AOCED working with Indian Hill Music Dir. of Development Catherine Coleman organized, scheduled and conducted a Downtown Ayer Restaurant-Owner & Municipal Officials Delegation Tour of the Center (still under construction) on Saturday, February 26th at 2:30PM. The Downtown Ayer Delegation was limited to a total of six (6). The Tour and discussions of future partnerships was outstanding and most promising. Downtown Ayer and the Indian Hill Music Center at Groton will have a strong working partnership.

Comprehensive Downtown Ayer Main Street/Sidewalk Re-Design/Re-Construction Project (Federal TIP Grant): On February 15th the Dir. of AOCED organized, scheduled and conducted a Downtown Ayer Main Street property-owner, local bicycling advocates, and municipal team ZOOM Meeting to review and discuss the proposed MassDOT Main Street Design Concepts. Outstanding participation and great discussion made this important meeting most successful. The Dir. of AOCED will next be organizing, scheduling & conducting a Main Street Downtown Ayer Group Site Tour (in early March) to produce a strong and unified local design concept/s for discussion and submission to MassDOT. 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.

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT)

The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust launched their new Ayer Rental Assistance Program (ARAP). This program will give monthly rental assistance to five (5) Ayer families for the coming year. The AOCED provided multiple avenues of outreach to inform the community of its new Rental Assistance Program, including social media, mailings to landlords, postings in community centers, libraries and churches and a press release. We were interviewed by the local newspaper, and an article was written about this new program. The Office of Community & Economic Development interfaced with members of the community interested in the Ayer Rental Assistance Program; handing out applications, answering questions and helping people to fill out their applications. The review of all application will happen in the first two weeks of March.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee (AAHC)

The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee continues to review Ayer's housing needs. The Committee has been evaluating town owned-land and potential available site for the development of additional affordable housing.

FY19 CDBG-CV Grant

Ayer Office of Community and Economic Development held a public hearing on February 28th to engage the public in a discussion regarding our current FY 19CDBG-CV grant program. AOCED took the opportunity to discuss with the public ideas for future CDBG grant applications, as well as a potential Ayer Housing Rehabilitation program CDBG grant application.

FY19 CDBG-CV grant program has been extended to June 30, 2022. AOCED continues working with two of our CDBG-CV social services programs, the library internet access program and Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry.

Ayer Emergency Housing Rehabilitation Program – Ayer Program Income

The Emergency Housing Rehabilitation program currently has approximately \$5000 of program income in its budget.