

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: March 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 and conducted the “Park Street Public Utilities Companies Joint Site Tour” at 12:00Noon on Thursday, March 3rd. The Public Utilities Tour of Park Street was attended by Dir. of AOCED, Supt. of Ayer Public Works, and Ayer Planning Board member Ken Diskin. 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. National Grid has informed the Town of Ayer & Green International Associates (project consultants) that National grid will require a \$15,000 fee to produce a full design plan for undergrounding public utility lines on Park Street. Design Project completion, as per contractual grant agreement, is due June 30, 2022.

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

Improvement Project: The Project construction started on March 28th 2022. 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. Construction coordination meetings (between Ayer municipal staff, Devens Enterprise Commission staff, MassDevelopment staff & Onyx Construction Co. officials) are scheduled for every other Wednesday morning at the Ayer DPW Building Meeting Room. The next quarterly report to MassWorks administrator is due on April 15th. 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 March 15th the Dir. of AOCED organized, scheduled and conducted an Ayer Municipal Team ZOOM Meeting with officials of the DMG Investment Group regarding preliminary conceptual designs for the construction of a new multi-story mixed-use building at 210 West Main Street “current Devens Shopping Plaza Building” in 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 in April.

Kiddie Junction Playground/Area Re-Development Project: 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” was scheduled and successfully conducted on Saturday, March 5th at 11:00AM at Pirone Park. Also, in March the AOCED (Community Development Program Manager, Alicia Hersey) set-up and launched the “Re-Imagine Kiddie Junction Playground Survey”. The Survey proved most successful with 300+ survey responses! The Dir. Of AOCED participates in all Friday afternoon “Kiddie Junction Project” Team ZOOM Meetings. The Project Team is next scheduling and promoting a “Community Input Design Forum” (with project consultant (BETA) at Ayer Shirley Regional High School for early April.

Comprehensive Downtown Ayer Main Street/Sidewalk Re-Design/Re-Construction Project (Federal TIP Grant): On Friday, March 4th, the Dir. of AOCED organized, scheduled and conducted a Downtown Ayer Main Street property-owner, business-owner, local bicycling advocates, and municipal team “Design Walking Tour of Main Street” to review and discuss the proposed MassDOT Main Street Design Concepts. As was the case with the previous month’s ZOOM Meeting, the Walking Tour was very well-attended.

Devens/Ayer Jurisdictional Committee Formation/Devens Neighborhood Tour: The Dir. of AOCED has been working to organize, schedule, promote and conduct a (first-time) Devens Historic Neighborhood Walking Tour for the Auman Street & Bates Street residential neighborhood at Devens. Tour is scheduled for Saturday, April 2nd at 11:00AM. The Tour event is designed to cultivate stronger working and civic relations between the Devens Historic Neighborhoods that are located within the historic boundaries of the Town of Ayer and the residents/municipal team of Ayer. The Dir. of AOCED seeks 2-3 residents of the Auman Street & Bates Street Neighborhood to serve on the soon to formed Ayer/Devens Jurisdictional Framework Committee that will provide guidance for the 2033 proposed transfer of Devens back to the original three towns of Ayer, Harvard & Shirley.

Ayer Disabilities Commission: On Thursday, March 31st, the Ayer Disabilities Commission conducted their meeting. The Agenda focused on the finalization of an updated Mission Statement for the Commission. Also, “Town of Ayer ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan Review Sessions” between the Disabilities Commission members and Ayer municipal department staff are scheduled to start in April with first review sessions scheduled for Information Technology Dept. & Benefits & Payroll Dept. directors. The Disabilities Commission also discussed ADA compliance and design guidance for new Kiddie Junction Playground replacement project, and the ongoing Downtown Ayer Main Street Re-Design & Re-Construction Project.

New Spring Pole Banners for Downtown Ayer Main Street: The AOCED selected, fabricated, and funded 40+ new vibrant Spring Pole Banners for Main Street in Downtown Ayer. Thanks, as always, to Ed Kelley & Kyle for installing the banners on Main Street's decorative poles. Downtown Ayer needs much more visual beautification (both public & private properties) for the Spring & Summer of 2022!

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT)

The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust has selected the initial five families which will receive rental assistance through the Ayer Rental Assistance Program (ARAP) for the upcoming year. Rental assistance will start May 1st. The building inspector and fire inspector have been very helpful in conducting unit safety inspections on the units participating in our Rental Assistance program. Both tenants and landlords have been both interested and cooperative in making this program work.

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 affordable housing in an effort to meet the housing needs of the Town.

FY19 CDBG-CV Grant

The FY19 CDBG-CV grant will conclude June 30th. At this point we still have two social service programs using the final portions of their budgets, Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry and the Library Internet Access Program.

Ayer Emergency Housing Rehabilitation Program – Ayer Program Income

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

Ayer Commons, 65 Fitchburg Rd. – Chapter 40B Residential Development

Ayer's Zoning and Housing departments continue discussions with NOAH (Neighborhood of Affordable Housing regarding their prospective 40B project. NOAH has received an eligibility letter, with contingencies from DHCD.