

# Town of Ayer

## Office of the Town Planner



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Town of Ayer | Ayer Town Hall | 1 Main Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor | Ayer, MA 01432 | 978-772-8218 | [www.ayer.ma.us](http://www.ayer.ma.us)

### Monthly Staff Report

To: Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager

From: Mark Archambault, Ayer Town Planner

Re: Monthly report for March 2022

Date: April 20, 2022

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#### 1. Project Review and Planning Board meetings:

The Planning Board met over Zoom on **Tuesday, March 22, 2022.**

##### Public Hearing on Zoning Bylaw amendments:

At its March 22 meeting the Planning Board held a public hearing on proposed amendments to the Ayer Zoning Bylaw to be considered at the April 25, 2022 Annual Town Meeting. These include:

- a. Correcting the minimum lot size in the Light Industrial zoning district from 120,000 square feet to 20,000 square feet. The 120,000 sq.ft. minimum lot size was incorrectly carried over from the pre-2018 Ayer Zoning Bylaw. The proposed amendment would correct the minimum required lot size in the district to 20,000 sq.ft. as was originally intended.
- b. Re-order the definitions in the Definition section of the Ayer Zoning Bylaw to re-order the list of definitions in correct alphabetic order and add new definitions of multi-family housing and dwellings in order to clarify that section.
- c. Citizen Petition to rezone 27 Harvard Road from General Residence (GR) to General Business (GB).

##### Development Review:

**ANRs:** The Planning Board approved two 'Approval Not Required' lot line adjustments in March. The first was for Januskiewicz on Groton School Road and the second was for McPadden on East Main Street.

**Site Plan:** On March 22, 2022, the PB approved a **stormwater management permit** and associated **Site Plan** approval for the installation of a new 115/23 kV electric switching station at the existing electric substation known as Sandy Pond Substation #237 at 65 Westford Road at the request of New England Power Company (NEPCo).

The site is located in Ayer's Industrial Zoning District, and improvements will consist of new sub-station related equipment, security fencing and stormwater management facilities. No new buildings are proposed with this project. The switchyard will have a footprint of approximately 29,000 sq.ft. This project has received an Order of Conditions from the Ayer Conservation Commission.

## **2. Ongoing Projects continuing into March 2022:**

### **Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) Working Group and Regulations:**

The Town Planner is preparing new regulations and design guidelines to assist in review of open space residential subdivisions (OSRDs). The Town Planner reconvened the "OSRD Regulations and Design Guidelines Working Group" in January, which also met several times in February and March. Adoption of these Regulations is anticipated to occur in early 2022. The Working Group consists of two members of the Ayer Planning Board, two members of the Ayer Conservation Commission and the DPW Director.

## **3. Land-Use Meetings in March 2022:**

The March Land-Use meeting was held on March 17. Current and potential future projects under review by the Land-Use Boards and related concerns were discussed.

## **4. MBTA Communities:**

The Ayer Planning Department is gearing up to meet the requirements of a new law in Massachusetts that aims to provide much needed multi-family housing in communities served by or adjacent to MBTA Commuter Rail, Subway and other transit.

Enacted as part of the [economic development bill](#) in January 2021, new Section 3A of M.G.L. c. 40A (the Zoning Act) requires that an MBTA community shall have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets other criteria set forth in the statute:

- Minimum gross density of 15 units per acre
- Not more than ½ miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable.
- No age restrictions
- Suitable for families with children.

At first glance, it appears that Ayer is likely close to meeting these requirements under its current zoning, including the two Form-Based Code districts in combination with its General Residence district.

In order to be sure that Ayer can meet the requirements of the Act, the Town Planner applied for a technical assistance grant from the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) through the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program. The Town of Ayer recently learned that it was awarded this grant, with the effort to start later this spring.

Based on the findings of this study the Town Planner will lead an effort to see what Ayer might need to do in order to meet the requirements of the MBTA Communities Act and whether any amendments to the Ayer Zoning Bylaw are needed.

