

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: April 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.

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. The Dir. of AOCED composed Memo 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 Dir. of AOCED completed and submitted the FY 22 3rd Quarter West Main Street MassWorks Grant Project Report to the MassWorks administrator on April 15th. Project construction started on March 28th 2022. The landmark “Smart Growth” public infrastructure project designed to function in accordance with the (2019) West Ayer Village Form-Based Zoning Code will 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. During the month of April, the West Main Street re-construction project progressed with no delays and under favorable conditions. The project is on schedule. The AOCED and our project partners at Devens Enterprise Commission and MassDevelopment at Devens are most thankful to the property-owners, business-owners, business customers and clients on West Main Street for their tolerance and support (during the tough construction conditions). The AOCED also thanks the Ayer Police Department for assuring the safety of the general public, construction workers, motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists moving through the project area. The Project is contractually required to be 100% completed by May 2023; 75% project completion is scheduled for October 2022.

Ayer/Devens Neighborhoods “Pocket Forest” Pilot Project Grant Production:

During the month of April the Dir. of AOCED, in partnership with the Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC) and consultants BSC Group, engaged in the formulation and production of a \$323,230 grant application proposal to the MA Executive Office of Environment & Energy – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Office for a Ayer/Devens “Pocket Forest” Pilot Project which proposes to work directly with residents and neighbors of Ayer’s neighborhoods in close proximity to heavy freight railroad lines and heavy trucking routes – to design and introduce the planting of neighborhood shade trees in order to provide more cooling in the summer, noise and visual natural green screening from rail tracks & trucking roadways, and uplifting natural

green into extensively asphalted older neighborhoods. The grant application submission deadline is May 5th.

Kiddie Junction Playground/Area Re-Development Project: On April 1st the Dir. of AOCED participated in a Project Team Meeting with consultant in preparation for upcoming “Re-Imagine Kiddie Junction Community Input Forum” scheduled for Thursday evening, April 7th. The Dir. of AOCED served as a Community Input Forum facilitator with the Ayer Parks Director, Ayer Parks Commissioners & the Project Consultant at the April 7th Community Input Forum conducted at ASRHS. The AOCED will document, compile, assess and prepare the (Community Engagement profile) from various community input opportunities, including the On-Site Public Design Forum at Pirone Park, the Community-wide Survey Results, the April 7th Community Input Forum at ASRHS, and additional community engagement activities in order to formulate a strong and competitive grant foundation as AOCED proceeds to identify and pursue various State & Federal grant funding opportunities for future phases of Ayer’s new inclusive playground amenity development at Pirone Park.

\$4.8 Million Comprehensive Downtown Ayer Main Street/Sidewalk Re-Design/Re-Construction Project (Federal TIP Grant): Following the successful Downtown Ayer/Main Street Re-Design & Re-Construction ZOOM Forum, and the subsequent well-attended Downtown Ayer/Main Street Re-Design & Re-Construction Group Site-Walk of Main Street in March - organized, scheduled and conducted by the AOCED in order to receive design input from Downtown Ayer Main Street property-owners, business-owners, local bicycling advocates, and the Ayer municipal team – The Dir. of AOCED produced a recommended Main Street Cross-Section Design which provides for a new Main Street bicycle lane (satisfying MassDOT Complete Street Design Requirements), the preservation of on-street parking, narrower travel lanes to calm heavy trucking traffic, the introduction of sidewalk shade trees, and enhanced crosswalks. The AOCED working in coordination with Ayer DPW, Ayer PD and Ayer FD is prepared to engage in design review sessions with MassDOT officials, gain approval and accelerate (Federal TIP-Transportation Improvement Plan) funding through the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) in the upcoming year

Devens/Ayer Jurisdictional Committee Formation/Devens Neighborhood Tour: The Auman St. & Bates St. at Devens Neighborhood Historic Walking Tour proved to be a great success. Conducted on Saturday, April 2nd the 1st-time Tour attracted over 35 residents of Devens and Ayer. Most of the Tour-goers were the neighbors of Auman Street & Bates Street and residents of other Devens neighborhoods. The Tour event took place in order 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 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.