

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: October 2022

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

2nd Annual Newton Street Folk & Arts Festival in Downtown Ayer: The 2nd Annual Newton Street Folk & Arts Festival was scheduled for and conducted on Saturday, October 1st. Unfortunately, Hurricane Ian moved up the east coast and hit the event during the morning hours with some showers and an unsettled, cloudy weather into the afternoon; Festival organizers decided not to re-schedule as (rain date) Sunday would be unsettled weather as well. We proceeded to conduct the event. All our local hometown organizations came through for the community and participated in the event, as did all local artisans & craftspeople, local restaurants & eateries, and all musical & dance performers – so, the weather could not (and did not) dampen the enthusiasm, joy, and warmth of hometown Ayer! It was a great Festival for all. Get ready for the 3rd Annual Newton Street Festival – 1st Saturday in October 2023. Thanks to our generous and great local corporate Festival sponsors Main Street Bank (Gold) and Catania Oils (Silver). Special thanks once again this year for an unsolicited \$1,000 Festival sponsorship/donation from Lorna Briggs and the Briggs Family of Ayer.

Ayer's Neighborhood Miyawaki Forests Project Starts! – One of the 1st in the Nation: The AOCED was notified in early August that the Town of Ayer & Devens Enterprise Commission were awarded a \$282,640 MVP Action Grant to fund a most innovative "Miyawaki Forest" Planting Pilot Project for Ayer's neighborhoods that are most vulnerable to adverse climate-change impacts, including heat-island expansion, lack of trees & greenspace, bad air quality resulting from constant locomotive/freight railroad exhaust & heavy trucking routes, storm-water street flooding, and neighborhood disinvestment and property neglect. In October, the Dir. of AOCED outreached to the City of Cambridge MA and organized, scheduled and conducted a Tour/Visitation with the Ayer/Devens Pocket Forest Project Team of the 1st Miyawaki Forest in the Northeast US at Danehy Park & the 2nd Miyawaki Forest construction site in Cambridge to learn for the Ayer/Devens Project. The Team Visitation is scheduled for November 2nd. The Big Ayer Neighborhood Miyawaki Forest Project "Public Forum" is proposed for mid-November and will take place at Historic Ayer Town Hall in the Great Hall.

Restoration/Preservation of the Historic (1943) Ayer Howitzer Cannon: The Dir. of AOCED assisted the Office of the Town Manager & Ayer Facilities Director with this important local history/heritage preservation project during the month of September. Dir. of AOCED made presentation on behalf of the Office of the Town Manager at the October 24th Ayer Town Meeting in support of CPA funding for the Historic Howitzer Restoration Project. Ayer Town Meeting voted in favor of the requested CPA project funding. Preparations are being coordinated with Certified Welding & Fabrication of Shirley to remove the Historic Howitzer from the front ground of Ayer Town Hall and transportation to their shop in Shirley for restoration during the winter months. The

Historic Howitzer with reunited original granite block and brass plaque will be set upon new circular base pad, with proposed re-dedication ceremony scheduled for Memorial Day 2023.

Ayer Disabilities Commission - Proposed New Members: The Dir of AOCED conducted community outreach during the late summer/early fall to identify prospective new members of the recently reestablished Ayer Disabilities Commission. The Dir. of AOCED is pleased report that three (3) highly-motivated and civically-engaged residents of Ayer will be submitting Expression of Interest Letters (to be appointed to the Ayer Disabilities Commission) to the Office of the Town Manager in early November. The Ayer Disabilities Commission currently has five (5) members of their board – the AOCED will recommend expansion of the Commission to seven (7) members – in order to accomplish the work (objectives & goals) of the recently adopted Town of Ayer ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan within the next 3-5 years.

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT): The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust held their October meeting on the 12th of October. The Trust reviewed recommendations by the Rental Assistance Working group on proposed changes to the program guideline. The AAHT Rental Assistance working group had met earlier in the week to review the Ayer Rental Assistance Program (ARAP), evaluating the first year of assistance (phase 1), they made recommendations of changes and updates. After reviewing the proposed changes, the Trust voted to make the proposed updates.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee: The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee's October's meeting was canceled due to lack of quorum. Members of AAHC participated in the ZBA October 19th meeting when the ZBA at which Green Internationals the peer reviewer for the Ayer Commons, 40B project presented their initial findings.

Proposed Ayer Commons – 40B Project: The Ayer Office of Community and Economic Development continues to participate in meetings of the Ayer ZBA and CPC as NOAH (Neighborhood of Affordable Housing) has moved their comprehensive permit, 40B application, and NOAH's application for CPC project funding through the review process. Both the AAHT and AAHC have been very active in helping CPC with community outreach and education on the communities need for Affordable Housing. With help from both the AAHC (committee) and the AAHT (trust) NOAH's application for CPC funding passed unanimously at the Fall Special Town Meeting.

CDBG: The AOCED has started an evaluation process and we look to the next CDBG grant cycle, we are looking at the needs of the Ayer community and reaching out to the public for input. Ayer's Housing Rehabilitation program and new Senior Center are at the top of the list for possible CDBG grant projects.

Ayer Emergency Housing Rehabilitation Program – Ayer Program Income: The Emergency Housing Rehabilitation program currently has \$5000 of Program Income in its budget. Overall Program Income currently has a total budget of \$15,000.