

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: November 2022

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

Ayer's Neighborhood Miyawaki Forests Project Launch: 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, unhealthy air quality resulting from constant locomotive/freight railroad exhaust & heavy trucking routes, storm-water street flooding, and neighborhood disinvestment and property neglect. On November 2nd the Ayer/Devens Pocket Forest Project Team engaged in a Tour/Visitation of the 1st Miyawaki Forest in the Northeast US in the City of Cambridge & the 2nd Miyawaki Forest currently under construction in Cambridge. The Team proceeded to organize, schedule and conduct the Ayer/Devens Neighborhood Pocket Forest Project Kick-Off "Public Forum" on Wed., November 16th at Historic Ayer Town Hall in the Great Hall. The Public Forum proved to be a great success with 30+ Ayer residents actively participating. A number of priority/prospective Pocket Forest Planting Sites were identified for the upcoming Ayer Neighborhood Pocket Forest Site Selection Walking Tours scheduled for December.

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 Dir. of AOCED is pleased to report that three (3) Ayer residents have expressed strong interest in being appointed to the Ayer Disabilities Commission. The three prospective appointees are Mindy Titus, Brenda Boisseau, and Russell Anderson of Ayer. With the addition of three new commissioners the Ayer Disabilities Commission from five (5) to seven (7) members the Commission is prepared to incrementally accomplish the substantial work (objectives & goals) of the recently adopted Town of Ayer ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan within the next 3-5 years.

Shirley Street/The Acre Historic Walking Tour: On Sat., November 5th The Dir. of AOCED scheduled, promoted and conducted the "Shirley Street/The Acre/St. Mary's Parish Historic Walking Tour" in preparation for the upcoming Ayer/Devens Neighborhood Pocket Forest Project "Public Forum" on Nov. 16th. The Neighborhood Tour was a great success with 35+ Ayer Neighborhood Historic Tour-goers.

Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee Monthly Meeting: The Dir. of AOCED actively attended the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee Monthly Meeting (MJTC) – to support the Town of Ayer (TIP) Transportation Improvement

Program Funding request/plan for the full-redesign & re-construction of Main Street in Downtown Ayer for (2025).

Movie Filming Administration/Tiny's Restaurant Location: The Dir. of AOCED administered the Filming Application process/scheduling for an independent film production titled "The Shade". The filming location was Tiny's Restaurant and the scene filming successfully took place on Monday, November 7th in the early/late evening.

New Depot Square Park Ribbon-Cutting/Dedication Ceremony: The Dir of AOCED & Community Programs Manager assisted with/attended the Depot Square Park Dedication Ceremony. The Dir. of AOCED participated as a speaker for the Dedication Ceremony.

Regional Transportation Plan Outreach-Session (DOT/District 3): On November, 15th, the Dir. of AOCED represented the Town and attended the important MA DOT/District 3 Outreach Session. The Session was (the) opportunity for Town of Ayer professional staff to inform and advise on the production of the (2024) Regional Transportation Plan. "The Regional Transportation Plan provides guidance to local and state officials in deciding how to spend federal and state transportation funds as well as outlines the transportation priority needs for the region. The plan is a long-range document for the maintenance and improvement for the road, highway, bicycle and pedestrian, bridge, rail, transit, freight and airport systems of the Montachusett Region over the next 20 years."

AYER OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (AOCED)

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT): The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust canceled their Nov meeting on the 16th due to a conflict of scheduling. Members were interested in participating in the Ayer/Devens Neighborhood Pocket Forest Planting Project public forum being held on the same evening. Considering the environmental justice nature of the Pocket Forest Planting Project which will be taking place within our moderate to low-income neighborhoods this seemed an appropriate choice for the Trust members. It was agreed that the final review of the FY23 Ayer Rental Assistance Program guidelines would be completed in December.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee: The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee's November meeting was held on the 18th. Members of AAHC reviewed the positive outcome of the CPC vote to fund the nonprofit 40B development by NOAH (Neighborhood of Affordable Housing). The Committee agreed that their proactive public outreach helped pass this funding request unanimously at the Fall Special Town Meeting. Members of the committee highlighting Janet Providakes' leadership in this effort.

The Affordable Housing Committee continues to discuss the issues of limited affordable housing and increasing rents throughout the Town. Evaluating the possibility of zoning changes that would encourage the development of affordable housing within our community.

Proposed Ayer Commons – 40B Project: The Ayer Office of Community and Economic Development continues to participate in meetings of the Ayer ZBA 40B review process. In November Ayer's Zoning Board of Appeals continued its review of NOAH (Neighborhood of Affordable Housing) comprehensive permit, 40B application evaluating the peer review done by Green International Affiliates. Paul Haverty, the Town's consultant who is guiding the ZBA through this comprehensive permit process anticipates having a draft decision to present at the December ZBA meeting.

CDBG (Community Development Block Grants): In November the AOCED participated in DHCD's (Department of Housing and Community Development) FY 23 training session for the upcoming CDBG grant cycle. As we reach out to the community and gather input, we find that the 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 \$5,000 of Program Income in its budget. Overall Program Income currently has a total budget of \$15,000.