

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: December 2022

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manoian, Dir. AOCED

Ayer's Neighborhood Pocket "Miyawaki" Forests Project: In August 2022, the Town of Ayer & Devens Enterprise Commission were awarded a \$282,640 MVP Action Grant to fund a most innovative "Pocket 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. Dir. of AOCED is responsible for all grant/project/contractual administration including detailed monthly reports & invoicing. The Dir. of AOCED in partnership with project consultants organized, promoted and scheduled the Ayer Neighborhoods Pocket Forest Site Selection Public Tours for Sat. Dec. 3rd, however, bad weather resulted in reschedule for Sat., Dec. 17th. Dir. of AOCED participated in Devens Pocket Forest Site Selection Tour on Sat., Dec. 10th. Due to bad weather once again, the Ayer Site Selection Public Tour had to be reinvented to an innovative and 1st-time "Public ZOOM/Facebook Live Stream" Ayer Neighborhood Site Tour event. Six (6) Ayer neighborhood sites were toured/assessed/scored by the Pocket Forest Project Team over the course of five hours. Dir. of AOCED & Project Team then scheduled/conducted an Open Public Comment/Input ZOOM Forum that evening, Dec. 17th, to provide an opportunity for public comment & selection. The process resulted in the selection of the East Main Street/RR Bridge Green Slope as the Neighborhood Pocket Forest "Pilot Project" for this coming Spring 2023, and the green space at the Historic Sandy Pond Schoolhouse as the selected site for the 2023-24 Pocket Forest Project. Next steps include organizing/scheduling/conducting an open public/neighborhood design forum for the East Main St./RR Bridge Pilot Pocket Forest Project for Spring 2023.

Ayer Disabilities Commission - New Members Sworn-In/2023 Work: The Dir. of AOCED is pleased to report that three (3) Ayer residents have been appointed and sworn-in as new members of the Ayer Disabilities Commission. The three new 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. The next in-person meeting of the Ayer Disabilities Commission is scheduled for Thursday, January 26th at 5:00PM at Ayer Town Hall. For 2023, the Ayer Disabilities Commission will review/comment on the design/construction of the new "all-inclusive"/ADA accessible municipal Playground at Pirone Park, and the 25% design plans for the comprehensive re-design & re-construction of Main Street in Downtown Ayer, and full review of the Town of Ayer (2021) ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan.

7th Annual Downtown Ayer Winter Holiday Candlelight Stroll & Tree Lighting

Ceremony: The Dir. of AOCED in partnership with the Office of the Town Manager & municipal departments scheduled, organized, promoted and conducted the 7th Annual Downtown Ayer Winter Holiday Candlelight Stroll & Tree Lighting Ceremony on Sunday, Dec. 4th at 5:00PM. Originally scheduled for Sat. Night, unfavorable weather required a reschedule to Sunday Night, which worked well for all. The evening proved to be a wonderful success with hundreds of Ayer families, friends, neighbors and visitors being treated to a joyful Main Street Candle Light Stroll to Historic Ayer Town Hall. Then greeted by the musical holiday sounds of the Nashoba Valley Concert Band, the famous Ayer Locomotive Train Ice Sculpture, Sant Claus & Mrs. Claus for the outside Holiday Tree Lighting countdown! We are so pleased to report that Historic Ayer Town Hall was once again opened to the public for the children to come and visit with Santa Claus & Mrs. Claus - and especially for the amazing & special holiday concert performance by the Nashoba Valley Concert Band in the legendary Great Hall of Ayer Town Hall. A magical and memorable winter holiday evening in Downtown Ayer for all!

The Restoration of Ayer's (1943) Historic Howitzer: On Sunday, Dec. 4th the crew from Certified Welding & Fabrication of Shirley lifted by crane and removed the historic (1943) Howitzer from it's location at the front of Ayer Town Hall. The Howitzer is now at Certified Welding & Fabrication of Shirley at Lancaster Rd. for full-restoration, including the difficult re-fabrication of the original 1943 wheel rims. The Dir. of AOCED will monitor & document the restoration process. The restored Historic (1943) Ayer Howitzer will be brought back to its legacy location at Ayer Town Hall with a fine new circular base pad, and with the original (1983) Staff Sgt. Leon A. Cote plaque & granite monument brought back together. The Historic (1943) Ayer Howitzer will be re-dedicated at a great Memorial Day Ceremony in May 2023.

West Main Street Infrastructure/MassWorks Project & Grant Administration: The Dir. of AOCED in partnership with Dir. of Ayer Public Works continues to administer and advance the \$4+ million West Main Street Public Infrastructure Improvement Project to final completion for June 2023. The substantial underground public infrastructure elements including, new water lines, sewer lines, and culverts are completed. The new roadway base is completed. Starting in March 2023 work on the new granite curbing, new sidewalks, roadway, bike lanes, new shuttle bus station, crosswalks, sidewalk shade trees, etc. will be completed. Ayer's West Main Street, future "West Ayer Village" will emerge as Ayer's finest, newest, safest, healthiest, most connective, most walkable, and most valuable & attractive districts. That's a transformation!

AYER OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT): The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust met on December the 14th. Members reviewed and approved the updated Rental Assistance Guidelines and Application for the FY 23 Ayer Rental Assistance Program which will launch on January 3rd. In addition, the members reviewed the Ayer Commons comprehensive permit application which is currently moving through the ZBA review process.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee: The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee's December meeting was canceled due to lack of quorum. The committee has started the process of creating a zoning bylaw review working group which will be made up of members from the Planning Board and Housing Committee along with Town Officials from the Planning Department.

Proposed Ayer Commons – 40B Comprehensive Permit Project: The Ayer Office of Community and Economic Development participate in December 21st meeting of the Ayer Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). At this meeting Paul Haverly, the Town's consultant reviewed with the ZBA and the Applicant the draft decision stemming from the hearing process and the peer review. A major concern for the community members and Town officials which came to light regarding this project was walkability and connectivity to the grocery store and the Town center. A discussion was had on who was responsible for the sidewalks and cross walk needed to create this connection. The hearing was continued to January 11, 2023.

Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance Emergency Fund: The Select Board accepted donations from Main Street Bank, (\$5,000) and IC Federal Credit Union (\$2,500) at their December 20th meeting for the newly formed Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance Emergency Fund. This fund can help individuals with emergency housing needs quickly and efficiently. A board of Town officials has been formed to oversee and respond to request for aid.

CDBG - 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 \$39,675.