

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: January 2023

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

The “Ayer+Devens 2033” 2-Day Symposium: The Dir. of AOCED conceived, proposed, and is in the process of formulating, producing, scheduling and conducting the landmark “Ayer+Devens 2033” 2-Day Symposium for mid-March 2023. The “Ayer+Devens 2033” Symposium - The 2-Day Symposium will serve to catalyze and a collaborative civic effort to learn, better-understand, envision, plan, develop and drive an inclusive public-process whereby the Town of Ayer will determine if it is in the best interest of its current residents/future generations to reclaim the “historic Ayer land” within the Devens Enterprise Zone by the year of 2033. The “historic Ayer land” at Devens includes northerly/northeasterly portions of the former Fort Devens, and including the Nashua Riverfront along MacPherson Rd., and the former Moore Army Airfield. The 2-Day Symposium will offer participants a delicious Invitational Brunch, Visual Presentations, Group Shuttle Bus Tours of Devens & Nashua Riverfront, Topic Panel Discussions, Break-Out Discussion Groups, a “Future Ayer+Devens” Public Design Charrette Studio in the Great Hall, Facebook Live-Streaming Reports, and lots of good local foodie offerings!

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 on Saturday, Dec 17th, the Ayer Site Selection Public Tour had to be reinvented/rescheduled to an innovative and 1st-time “Public ZOOM/Facebook Live Stream” Ayer Neighborhood Site Tour event for Thursday, January 5th. 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, January 5th, 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. Organizing/scheduling/conducting an open public/neighborhood

design forum for the East Main St./RR Bridge Pilot Pocket Forest Project for Spring 2023 is proposed for the 1st Saturday in March.

Ayer Disabilities Commission - New Members Sworn-In/2023 Work: With our three new appointees, Mindy Titus, Brenda Boisseau, and Russell Anderson of Ayer. The Ayer Disabilities Commission met on Thursday, January 26th at 5:00PM at Ayer Town Hall. For 2023, the Ayer Disabilities Commission will begin a review and formulate an implementation process to incrementally accomplish the substantial work (objectives & goals) of the recently adopted Town of Ayer (2020) ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan within the next 3-5 years. In addition, the ADC will begin 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.

The Restoration of Ayer’s (1943) Historic Howitzer: 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 conducted a visit and progress inspection in January. The restoration process is progressing well. Jeff Nelson of CWFS made a noteworthy find in locating an exceedingly rare & original (1943) Howitzer M3 tire rim in Ohio – a perfect period-correct replacement for the existing badly deteriorated tire rim. 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.

AYER OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT):The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust met on January 19th through zoom. The Trust reviewed the timing and need for a CPC application for the replenishment of their Rental Assistance Program funding, as well as funding for future affordable housing projects.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee: The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee's monthly meeting was held on January 20th in person. Ken Diskin had created a list of zoning bylaw topic for review, the committee reviewed his suggestions and is sending the list on to the Zoning Bylaw working group. As reported last month this group will be made up of members from the Planning Board and Housing Committee along with Town Officials from the Planning, Building and Community Development Departments.

Proposed Ayer Commons – 40B Comprehensive Permit Project: January 11th the Ayer Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) held their final meeting of the public hearing for the comprehensive permit (40B) application. At this meeting Paul Haverty, the Town's consultant reviewed with the ZBA and the Applicant the draft decision stemming from the hearing process and the peer review. The Ayer Office of Community Development along with members of the Affordable Housing Committee and Trust were present. There were negotiations on permitting fees and connecting a sidewalk which were decided satisfactorily for both parties. The Board approved the application as stated in their decision.

Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance Emergency Fund: The Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance Emergency Fund oversight board has been set up, it consists of the Assistant Town Manager, Council on Ageing Director, Deputy Police Chief and Deputy Fire Chief and the Community Development Program Manager.

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.