

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: April 2023

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

Formation of the “Ayer+Devens 2033 Study & Report Committee”: The Dir. of AOCED attended the April 12th Devens Jurisdictional Framework Committee (DJFC) Meeting. AOCED composed and produced the “Ayer+Devens 2033 Study & Report Committee” (Requests for Expressions of Interest to Serve) DRAFT Descriptive & Overview Sheet and associated “Expression of Interest to Serve” Application Form for submission to the Office of the Town Manager and Ayer Select Board for review and comment in preparation for the May 2nd Ayer Select Board Meeting.

Ayer Disabilities Commission: The Dir. of AOCED, who also serves as a member and Secretary of the Ayer Disabilities Commission (ADC), with fellow members of the ADC attended the Community Access Monitoring (CAM) Program Training Webinar conducted by Mass Office on Disabilities (MOD) on April 5th & April 6th. Members of the ADC requested to attend and did attend the April 13th meeting of the Ayer Parks Commission to engage in a design plan review/comment process for the new “all-inclusive” Pirone Park Playground amenity with regard to ADA/Handicap design and construction. The monthly Ayer Disabilities Commission Meeting was conducted on Thursday, April 27th.

Planting Day! Ayer East Main Street Neighborhood Pocket Forest Pilot Project: Following a hopeful year of grant-writing, exciting grant award announcement, project organizing & scheduling, project management & coordination, promotion & community engagement, project public forums, community design charrettes, public site tours, learning, discovering, and civic commitment – the Dir. of AOCED is proud to report that on Saturday, April 29th over one hundred (100+) Ayer residents, neighbors, friends and families joined together, with the guidance of our expert project consultants, at the East Main Street Greenspace at the Bridge and successfully planted the first innovative “Pocket Forest” in Central Massachusetts! What a day to remember! The “Ayer-Devens Pocket Forest Pilot Project at East Main Street” now stands as a noteworthy success story for the ongoing generational efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change, poor air quality, heat-island effects, too much asphalt, too few songbirds & pollinators, unhealthy street flooding, and preservation of our ground water to our most vulnerable neighborhoods and townships in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Unveiling Ceremony of Ayer’s Restored (1943) Historic Howitzer: At Noontime on Monday, April 17th, Patriots Day 2023, the Historic (1943) WWII Ayer Howitzer was officially unveiled and re-dedicated at a most memorable and meaningful civic ceremony conducted on the front grounds of Ayer Town Hall. The patriotic music of the Nashoba Valley Concert Band greeted the ceremony guests including members of the Cote Family, the Ayer Select Board, Ayer Town Manager, representatives of the Ft.

Devens Museum, representatives of certified Welding & Fabricating of Shirley (howitzer restorationists), Bert Gibson - Commander of the Ayer American Legion Post No.139, and many Ayer residents, friends and families. The (1943) WWII Howitzer has been restored back to its glorious and original olive drab green, the original rotted tire rims replaced/restored/refabricated, perfect replacement tires fitted, and placed on a world-class and beautiful new circular base pad designed and constructed by Pinard's Landscaping of Ayer. Thanks to the municipal Ayer Howitzer Restoration Project Team; thanks to the Ayer Community Preservation Committee, and thanks to Ayer Town Meeting for approving the project funding. And let us all forever remember Staff Sgt. Leon A. Cote and all those of Ayer who made the supreme sacrifice to defend our Nation.

Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)/ Downtown Ayer Main Street Re-Design/Construction Project Funding: The Dir. of AOCED attended the April 19th (MPO) Meeting in order to strongly advocate for an escalation of the (TEC) Funding Score for the Downtown Ayer Project – and to accelerate the approval and award of project funding for 2026.

1st Ayer Neighborhood Historic Walking Tour of the Season: The Dir. of AOCED conducted the 1st Ayer Neighborhood Historic Walking Tour on Thursday, April 13th in the Historic East Main Street Neighborhood titled “Silas & Sarah Nutting’s Neighborhood”. It was a beautiful warm sunny April evening – and more than twenty (20) Ayer neighbors & friends joined together for the fascinating, informative and enjoyable 1.5-hour walking/wheeling tour.

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT)

The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust met on April 26th on zoom. The Trust reviewed the Rental Assistance program FY23/24 application process and applicant profiles. They agreed to continue to look at this information with an eye to reviewing whether the program is meeting the needs of our community.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee

The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee’s monthly meeting was canceled for lack of quorum. The **Smaller Homes/Smaller Lot Working Group meeting was also canceled due to lack of quorum.** 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. They are reviewing the Town’s zoning with the goal of encouraging more affordable housing.

Proposed Ayer Commons – 40B Comprehensive Permit Project

The applicant, NOAH, has acquired the property at 65 Fitchburg Road. They currently are completing their application for the state, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which is their subsidizing agent. This will include regulatory agreements, financial feasibility, and subsidy plans.

Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance Emergency Fund

The Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance board received no application in April.

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.