

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: September 2023

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

Ayer-Lancaster-Lunenburg-Shirley Regional Trucking/Freight Study & Committee:

In preparation for the September launch of the “Ayer-Lancaster-Lunenburg-Shirley Trucking/Freight Study” Project & Committee Meetings administered by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), the Dir. of AOCED began review and analysis of study orientation material and background documentation. The 1st meeting of the Trucking/Freight Study Committee is scheduled for Thursday, October 5th. The Town of Ayer will be represented on the Committee by APD Deputy Chief Bigelow and the Dir. AOCED.

The Town of Ayer – Devens Resolution Committee:

The meeting of the Devens Resolution Committee was conducted on Wednesday, September 27th at 5:00PM – and was conducted as a “Mobile Workshop/Group Tour” of the historic Ayer lands and buildings in Devens. The members of the Devens Resolution Committee met at the large surface lot at 29 Antietam Drive at 4:45PM – a shuttle bus was provided by MART for the group tour. The Mobile Workshop/Tour included stops at the (1931) Hospital Building (today’s Clear Path for Veterans), the (1929) Regimental Barracks (today’s Vicksburg Square), the (1931) Auman & Bates Street Neighborhoods, the Independence Drive & Cook Street Industrial/Commercial District but were unable to Tour the MacPherson Rd. Nashua Riverfront due to flood/road closure. The Mobile Workshop/Group Tour was most engaging and useful for the orientation of our new Committee members.

Park Street “Traditional Street” Redesign/Reconstruction Project: The Dir. of AOCED organized, scheduled and conducted a municipal project team Site Walk Meeting on Friday, September 22nd at 11:00AM along the Park Street corridor between Main Street & Groton Street. National Grid design plans and cost estimates for “undergrounding the utility poles & overhead wires” have been received by AOCED & DPW. Dir. of AOCED recommends the formulation, production and submission of a Commonwealth of Massachusetts FY25 or FY26 MassWorks Grant application in the amount of approx. \$4 million to fund the proposed new “complete & traditional downtown street” design and construction.

Downtown Ayer Main Street (TIP) Redesign & Reconstruction Project:

On September 20th Dir. of Ayer DPW & Dir. of AOCED participated in a project critical ZOOM Meeting with officials of MassDOT (Department of Transportation), and members of our project consultants from Tighe & Bond (transportation engineers). The Dir. of AOCED is pleased to report a major project breakthrough (agreement) during this critical meeting with MassDOT officials, resulting from both Dir. of AOCED & Dir. of Ayer

DPW making strong cases for waiving the absolute MassDOT requirement for dedicated bicycle lanes in both the eastbound & westbound (both sides of Main Street in Downtown Ayer), and for the preservation of on-street parking on both sides of Main Street. At this critical meeting MassDOT officials agreed to (waive) the dedicated bicycle lane requirement on both sides of Main Street, and to work with the Town and project consultants to design a (eastbound) dedicated bicycle lane infrastructure from the Rail Trail at Groton Street along the Cambridge Street/Newton Street/Columbia Street which will then join with Main Street. With this agreement for waiver, the long-awaited project to redesign and reconstruction Main Street in Downtown Ayer is approved to advance for federal TIP (Transportation Improvement Project) funding from the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission – which now ranks the Downtown Ayer Main Street Project as the highest scoring project for future funding in the MPRC region. The project funding will be approx. \$5-6 million and scheduled for 2026-27.

3rd Annual Newton Street Folk & Arts Festival:

During the month of September, the Dir. of AOCED continued to be fully engaged in planning, fundraising, organizing, scheduling and advancing all activities involved with conducting the 3rd Annual Newton Street Folk & Arts Festival in Downtown Ayer scheduled for Saturday, October 7th. This very popular local downtown festival has become a great new tradition in our community.

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT):

The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust did not hold a meeting in September. Shaun Copeland represented the Trust at the CPC public hearing on October 6th, reviewing the AAHT request for \$200,000 of CPA funds. The Trust is requesting \$200,000 as follows: \$72,000 for rental assistance, \$125,000 for future housing support and/or acquisition, and \$3,000 for administration from the CPC to be voted on at the Fall Special Town Meeting.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee:

The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee's monthly meeting was held on September 15th, 2023. The committee continued their planning for their October 19th public input session, "Future of Housing in Ayer". The committee is looking to engage the public in a discussion of housing needs and development in Ayer. This will be an interactive discussion and listening process.

Proposed Ayer Commons – 40B Comprehensive Permit Project:

The Ayer Select Board at their September 5th meeting approved a letter of Support requesting the State waive the Appraisal Requirement for the property at 65 Fitchburg Road, being developed by NOAH (Neighborhood of Affordable Housing) as an Affordable Housing project, (40B).

Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance Emergency Fund:

The Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance board approved two applications for assistance in September.

CDBG**Ayer Housing Rehabilitation Program – Ayer Program Income:**

On September 5th the Ayer Select Board voted to approve the use of Program Income funds in the Ayer Housing Rehabilitation Program. It was noted that \$15,000 would be held a side for Emergency Housing Rehabilitation.