

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: October 2023

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

The Town of Ayer – Devens Resolution Committee:

The meeting of the Devens Resolution Committee was conducted on Wednesday, October 25th at 5:00PM at Ayer Town Hall. The Agenda included a follow-up discussion of the Mobile Workshop/Group Tour of the historic Ayer lands in Devens conducted for the September meeting of the committee. The members also engaged in a review and discussion of the various (Devens-based) municipal service data sets applicable to the comprehensive municipal study and report process. The Dir. of AOCED provided visual mapping content, list/overview of large industrial/commercial properties located in the so-called “Devens Industrial Park”, within the historic Ayer lands section of Devens on Independence Dr. and Cook Street, and also an outline of the Town of Ayer and Devens respective tax rates.

Park Street “Traditional Street” Redesign/Reconstruction Project:

The Dir. of AOCED organized, scheduled and conducted a municipal project team Site Walk Meeting with engineering/design consulting Project Manager Herman Peralta of Green International Associates on Tuesday, October 31st at 11:00AM along the Park Street corridor between Main Street & Groton Street. The municipal project team with Peralta engaged in detailed project site discussion and field observations regarding the opportunities, challenges, design options, private property impact, coordination, scheduling, communications/partnership with numerous public utility providers in order to accomplish removal of old utility poles & overhead wires, and undergrounding all utilities, and introducing sidewalks on both sides of Park Street and traditional downtown on-street parking on the north-side of Park Street. Dir. of AOCED is proceeding with the formulation, production and submission of a Commonwealth of Massachusetts FY25 or FY26 MassWorks Grant application in the amount of approx. \$5 million to fund the proposed new “complete & traditional downtown street” design and construction.

3rd Annual Newton Street Folk & Arts Festival in Downtown Ayer:

Following months of planning, fundraising, organizing, and scheduling the AOCED successfully conducted the 3rd Annual Newton Street Folk & Arts Festival in Downtown Ayer on Sunday, October 8th. The popular local Festival was originally scheduled for Saturday, October 7th, however due to unfavorable weather conditions the event was rescheduled to the rain date of Sunday – which proved to be a beautiful sunny Autumn afternoon. Thanks to our generous local sponsors Main Street Bank and Catania Oils for sponsoring the great event for the first three years, and thanks to the many community-based organizations, churches, committees, boards, and groups for making the Festival so vibrant with their engaging Festival Booths and hometown warmth. And of course, the high-quality live musical performers were “the talk” of the day – great live

musical performance. This very popular local downtown festival has become a great new tradition in our community – get ready for the 4th Annual in 2024!

Dedication/Plaque Unveiling of the Historic (1907) Watering Basin Fountain at Depot Square Park:

On Friday Morning, October 20th Ayer Select Board Member Jannice Livingston, Town Manager Robert Pontbriand, Chairman of Ayer Historic Commission George Bacon and many more gathered for the joyful Unveiling Ceremony of the beautiful Bronze Plaque of the Historic (1907) Depot Square Watering Basin Fountain. This ceremony marked the official dedication of the world-class historic restoration and return of Ayer's (1907) Depot Square Watering Basin Fountain back to its original home in Depot Square. The Town of Ayer expresses special thanks and commendation to Dave Erickson of Littleton for his unmatched expertise, artfulness and enthusiasm for his professional restoration work on the magnificent historic fountain. The Historic Fountain is now the grand heritage centerpiece of the newly created Depot Square Park at Downtown Ayer's MBTA Commuter Rail Station and will be enjoyed by current generations – and generations to come.

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT):

The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust meeting was held on October 25th. The Trust has started their annual review of the Ayer Rental Assistance Program. At the Fall Special Town Meeting the Trust's request for \$200,000 from the CPC funds was approved.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee:

The Ayer Affordable Housing Committee held a planning meeting on October 2nd at which they made final plans for the "Future of Housing in Ayer" public forum which was held on October 19th. The public forum was a success with 40 to 45 people attending. The evening included a Visual Preference survey, presentations by the chairpersons of both the Affordable Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Trust as well as town staff presentations on sustainable development and demographics. Ron Morrison, an Affordable Housing Committee member, and local realtor gave a presentation on the current and past real estate market data in the Town of Ayer. In addition, the evening included citizen breakout groups which discussed aspects of living in Ayer and a panel of experts. The panel of experts included the DPW Director Dan Van Schalkwyk, Town Planner, Danny Ruiz and both a for profit and nonprofit developer, Bob France of Senate Construction and Phil Giffie of Neighborhood of Affordable Housing, respectively.

Proposed Ayer Commons – 40B Comprehensive Permit Project:

Neighborhood of Affordable Housing's Executive Director Phil Giffie participated in the "Future of Housing in Ayer" public forum as a panel expert. It was extremely helpful hearing from a nonprofit affordable housing development expert.

Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance Emergency Fund:

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

CDBG

Ayer Housing Rehabilitation Program – Ayer Program Income:

The OCED is reviewing the applications on its Housing Rehabilitation waiting list and has started the qualifying process of the next resident.