

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: December 2023

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manolian, Dir. AOCED

8th Annual Downtown Ayer Winter Holiday Candlelight Stroll & Tree Lighting Ceremony:

The 8th Annual Downtown Ayer Winter Holiday Candlelight Stroll & Tree Lighting Ceremony was joyfully conducted on Saturday, December 2nd. Approx. 350 candles were distributed to our Ayer families, friends, neighbors and visitors! It was the best attended Candlelight Stroll & Tree Lighting as yet. Town of Ayer thanks the wonderful Nashoba Valley Concert Band for providing music at the Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony – and for their amazing Winter Holiday Band Concert in Ayer Town Hall's historic Great Hall with a powerful 35-piece band. And once again, thanks to Dan & Karin Swanfeldt for making sure that Santa Claus & Mrs. Claus joined with everyone at The Stroll & Ayer Town Hall to welcome & meet all the Ayer families and kids. And special thanks to all the talented young dance students at Maria's School of Dance for their festive dance performance in the Great Hall to kick-off the Band Concert. A truly magical winter holiday evening in Downtown Ayer!

Town of Ayer Devens Resolution Committee (DRC):

The Town of Ayer Devens Resolution Committee met on Wednesday, December 13th at 5:30PM at Ayer Town Hall. The Agenda included Dir. AOCED providing a preliminary review of the inventory list of commercial land & commercial building assets located in the historic Ayer portion of the Devens for fiscal and land development analysis at next meeting. The agenda also included an update and general discussion on recent Devens Jurisdiction Framework Committee/State Legislator activity with the proposed redevelopment of Vicksburg Square (1928-29 Devens Battalion/Regimental Barracks). Finally, it was agreed that in February 2024 the DRC will begin a process of inviting/reviewing municipal service impact of Ayer reclaiming Devens jurisdiction with various municipal department heads – starting with Ayer Public Works Dept. Ayer Police Dept. & Ayer Fire Department.

Devens Jurisdictional Framework Committee (DJFC):

The Dir. of AOCED, who serves as a member of the DJFC, attended the Wednesday, December 13th meeting of the DJFC. The meeting was conducted at Ayer Town Hall. Primary issue/s of discussion included the redevelopment of Vicksburg Square (1928-29 Devens Battalion/Regimental Barracks), the finalization & issuance of a Request For Interest (RFI) in order to engage with a private consultant/firm to advance comprehensive fiscal/service impact/governance options study & report for DJFC, and also to begin a preliminary formulation of a zoning amendment for the current obsolete Vicksburg Square (Business/Technology Zoning District) Zoning – into a progressive, high-performing, feasible, and sustainable mixed-use zoning district.

MBTA Communities Inclusionary Housing Bylaw – Economic Feasibility Study Project Mtg.:

The Dir. of AOCED organized, scheduled and conducted a municipal team meeting between Dir. AOCED, Community Dev. Program Manager/Ayer Affordable Housing Committee Administrator, Ayer Town Planner, and Chairman Ayer Planning Board in the AOCED office on Wednesday, December 13th. The meeting was conducted to coordinate team for the funding, production and delivery of a (*mandatory/required*) Economic Feasibility Study of Ayer's Inclusionary Housing Bylaw as per the new MA "MBTA Communities" zoning law. Ayer's current Inclusionary Housing Bylaw requires that 20% of all units (apartments) in new multi-unit buildings, with five or more units, be deed restricted as "Affordable". The 20% formula may be creating an economic barrier to the development of new local affordable housing supply – therefore the State requires that any MA communities with an Inclusionary Housing formula greater than 10% produce an Economic Feasibility Study to verify the level of potential economic barrier to delivering new affordable housing supply. This product must be delivered to MA EOHLIC by the end of calendar 2024.

\$300,000 MA Housing Choice Grant Award for Ayer Senior Center:

On Tuesday, December 12th the Dir. of AOCED was invited to and represented the Town of Ayer at Governor Healy's FY24 MA Housing Choice Grant Award Ceremony at the historic Bebee Library in Wakefield MA. The Dir. of AOCED was most pleased to have identified the \$300,000 grant opportunity, formulated & successfully submitted the grant application, and to be notified of the grant award to fund preliminary design/engineering and cost estimating professional services for the proposed new Town of Ayer Senior Center. The grant funds are available to the Ayer Senior Center Building Committee/Town of Ayer through June 2025.

Town of Ayer Disabilities Commission (ADC):

The Dir. of AOCED, who also serves as the ADC Secretary, worked closely with the Committee and the Ayer Town Manager/Municipal ADA Coordinator to research, formulate, and introduce suggested new ADA-based Definitions to the Town of Ayer Personnel & Policies Manual. The ADC also developed a suggested new "Protected Class Harassment Protection Policy" and "Americans with Disabilities Policy" sections for the Town of Ayer Personnel & Procedures Manual updating.

Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT):

The Ayer Affordable Housing Trust did not have a quorum for their December meeting. The FY24 Ayer Rental Assistance Program application period will open January 2, 2024.

Ayer Affordable Housing Committee:

The Affordable Housing Committee did not have a meeting in December.

Proposed Ayer Commons – 40B Comprehensive Permit Project

NOAH (Neighborhood of Affordable Housing) reported in December that the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities invited them to submit the Ayer Pre-App in the upcoming One Stop Housing Application round, for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.

Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance Emergency Fund

The Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance board received no applications for assistance in December.

CDBG – US Dept. HUD Community Development Block Grant**Ayer Housing Rehabilitation Program – Ayer Program Income**

The Office of Community & Economic Development approved an emergency rehabilitation application that included a new hot water heater and roof repair. The project was bid and awarded and work began Christmas week.