

## **Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development**

### **Monthly Report: February 2024**

*Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manoian, Dir. AOCED*

#### **MA Attorney General's Office Training on Zoning Bylaw Amendment Process & Bylaw Filing:**

Dir. AOCED registered and attended the February 8, 2024 Virtual Meeting scheduled and conducted by the MA Office of the Attorney General. Municipal Law Unit staff, headed by Asst. Attorney General Margaret Hurley, discussed a variety of topics, including the requirements under [Chapter 40, Section 32](#), and [Chapter 40A, Section 5](#); the necessary forms and information to be submitted to the Municipal Law Unit as part of the bylaw filing process; and an overview of the MBTA Communities zoning requirements under [Chapter 40A, Section 3A](#). Although the Town of Ayer has achieved interim compliance with the MBTA Communities Law, due to Ayer's formulation & adoption of the Downtown Ayer/Park Street Form-Based Zoning Code & the West Ayer Village Form-Based Zoning Code in 2019; substantial work is required to attain full State compliance/approval by December 2024.

#### **Town of Ayer 2024 Annual Disclosure Report:**

The Dir. AOCED reviewed, updated and submitted the relevant sections (Ayer & Devens employment numbers, new development & growth, climate-resiliency projects & efforts, new businesses, business expansion, demographic data, etc.) of the municipal Annual Disclosure Report. The Town of Ayer Annual Disclosure Report is administered by the Office of the Town Treasurer.

#### **MA One Stop for Community Growth FY25 Grant Cycle Overview Webinar:**

Dir. AOCED registered and attended the February 5, 2024 "MA One Stop for Community Growth" FY25 Grant Cycle Overview Webinar, so as to consistently position the Town of Ayer in the most competitive position and posture for future project & program grant awards. The Town of AOCED has established a strong working relationship and reputation of grant award success with the MA State granting agencies and administrators. Many competitive state grant opportunities are available for pursuit.

#### **Town of Ayer Devens Resolution Committee (DRC):**

Dir. AOCED attended the Town of Ayer Devens Resolution Committee Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 14, 2024. The monthly meeting featured an informative interactive dialogue session with Chief of the Ayer Fire Dept.-Tim Johnston. The Chief and DRC members engaged in a municipal fire services fiscal & staffing impact review discussion. Various large industrial properties, residential neighborhoods, level of water service, public infrastructure, roadway access, mutual aid, and many other items were reviewed and discussed for the benefit of the committee's work.

**Town of Ayer Disabilities Commission (ADC):**

The Dir. of AOCED, who also serves as the ADC Secretary, attended the February 26, 2024 meeting of the Ayer Disabilities Commission. Primary Agenda items included next steps with the formulation, development and launch of the proposed ADC “Disability Equipment Gifting Program”. The expansion of the ADC membership from seven (7) members to nine (9) members. ADC is pleased to report that three additional (3) Ayer residents have expressed interest in serving on the Ayer Disabilities Commission. ADC currently has six (6) active members. Ongoing work includes the continuous review and implementation of the (2020) Town of Ayer ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan.

**MRPC – Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting – Ayer Team Project Presentation Prep:**

The Dir. AOCED in coordination with Office of the Town Manager, Ayer DPW Dir., and Tighe & Bond (project engineering consultants) began discussions, communications and preparations for the highly-important and strategic Ayer Team Project Presentation at the MRPC Metropolitan Planning Organization Committee Meeting scheduled for March 20, 2024. The proposed approx. \$4-5 million federally-funded MPO project would result in the comprehensive redesign and reconstruction of Main Street, Columbia Street (up to Central Ave.) and West Main Street to Overhead RR Bridge (past Ayer Fire Station) and including the intersection of Main Street & Park Street. The project includes roadway improvements, new sidewalks, new crosswalks, new lighting, new bicycle lanes, new roadway stormwater management, new directions & wayfinding signage and more! The project is currently scheduled for 2029. The last time Downtown Ayer’s Main Street was comprehensively re-designed and re-constructed was in 1984-85.

**Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee Meeting & MRPC Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting Participation:**

Dir. of AOCED registered and participated in the February 14, 2024 meeting of the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee to advocate and advance the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)-funded Downtown Ayer Main Street Public Infrastructure Improvement Project on construction schedule for 2029. Dir. of AOCED also registered and participated in the February 21, 2024 MRPC MPO Meeting to advocate for Ayer’s project.

**Promotion/Design/Community Engagement Strategy Staff Support for Ayer Stormwater Utility Work Group:**

Dir. AOCED was requested by members of the Ayer Stormwater Utility Work Group to provide a community outreach/engagement/promotion overview and recommendations for the Ayer Stormwater Utility Work Group Public Forum scheduled for Wednesday Evening, February 28<sup>th</sup> at the Ayer Library. Dir. AOCED produced & provided recommended strategy & actions and designed/delivered the Visual Promotion posted on municipal website & municipal social media platforms in support of the Public Forum.

**Ayer Affordable Housing Trust (AAHT)**

This month's Ayer Affordable Housing Trust meeting was held on February 28<sup>th</sup> via zoom. The FY24 Rental Assistance application period closed out February 15<sup>th</sup> and the Community Development office received eighteen (18 ) applications. Two (2) of the eighteen (18) applications were ineligible. At the February 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting the members of the Trust approved eleven (11) households for the FY24 Rental Assistance Program. The other five (5) applications will go on the waiting list.

**Ayer Affordable Housing Committee**

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

**Proposed Ayer Commons – 40B Comprehensive Permit Project**

NOAH (Neighborhood of Affordable Housing) submitted their Ayer Fitchburg Road, 40B project application for Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program managed by the MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

**Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance Emergency Fund**

The Ayer Fuel and Housing Assistance board received one (1) application for assistance in February and it was approved.

**US HUD – Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

The Office of Community & Economic Development is in the process preparing the CDBG Grant Application to fund the Ayer Housing Rehabilitation Program.

**Ayer Housing Rehabilitation Program – Ayer Program Income**

The current emergency housing rehabilitation project is under construction. The weather has slowed it down, but we anticipate having this project completed in the month of March.