

**MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**405 Main Street**  
**Middlefield, Connecticut 06455**

Minutes of the June 20, 2023 Special Joint Meeting of Boards and Commissions

Call to Order

Bob Yamartino called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

***Carol Bufithis made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.***

Roll Call

Bob Yamartino, Carol Bufithis, and Jim Irish were present from the Board of Selectmen. The following were also present: Rick Santos, Beseck Lake Environment Committee; Michael Skelps, David Lowry, Lee Matterazzo, Mary Wolak from the Board of Finance; Alice Malcolm, Ken Twombly, Peter Neidhardt, David Lowry, Michael Skelps and Rob Poturnicki from Charter Revision Committee; Charlie Zieminski and Glenn McNamara from DMIAAB; Jen Huddleston, John Giammatteo, Sean Hayes, Darin Overton, and Ruth Vizard, Economic Development Commission; Paul Pizzo and Alice Malcolm, Firehouse Building Committee; Charlie Zieminski, Rob Poturnicki, and Linda Frier, Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency; Bill Konefal, Marc D'Orvilliers and Sue D'Orvilliers, Middlefield Historical Society; Amanda Caccamo and Hannah Malcolm, Parks and Recreation Commission; Susan McNamara, Kathy Weber, and Nate Kirschner, Planning and Zoning Commission; Michael Skelps, Registrars of Voters; Rob Poturnicki and Roberta Curtis, Water Pollution Control Authority; David Glueck, Peter Neidhardt, and Chris Champagne, Zoning Board of Appeals; Randy Bernotas, Inland Wetlands Agent; Brian Curtis, Town Engineer; Susan D'Orvilliers, Municipal Agent for the Elderly/Social Services Director; Anne Olszewski, Tax Collector; Rob Poturnicki, Emergency Management Director; Judi Rand, Executive Assistant; Denise Robidoux, Economic Development Coordinator; and Jason Wickham, Public Works Supervisor.

Welcome and Meeting Expectations

Bob Yamartino thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He believed that this may be the first time the town ever held a meeting of all the boards and commissions. He noted that it is volunteerism that keeps the town going and thanked everyone for their service to the town. Mr. Yamartino explained that the idea behind this meeting is to continue to keep the town moving forward. He explained that the federal government has released a good deal of grant money for projects in communities. Oftentimes, in order to qualify for those grants, it needs to be a shovel-ready project and Middlefield does not have them ready to go.

Mr. Yamartino would like to make people in the community aware of the potential projects and to volunteer to take the lead on them. Some of the proposed projects are wishes, others are needs and others may not be feasible. The Economic Development Commission was recently reformed and a number of ideas have come from them. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to review some of the projects and Mr. Yamartino noted that this is just the first of a series of meetings. Because of the number of projects to be discussed, no public comment will be allowed. They will be gathering input from the members of the boards and commissions, but the public may comment via email.

Bob Yamartino noted that some of the commissions will be involved in almost every project. He noted that he has heard from some townspeople who do not want to see any further development in town and don't want to see the quiet nature of the town disrupted. He noted that Planning and Zoning can control development by their regulations. Economic Development is reaching out to local businesses to see how the town can be more business-friendly. The town's tax base can be increased by the right types of businesses. He added that some of the projects are many years out.

Mr. Yamartino emphasized that this process is to help develop a plan for the town. He added that the town green does not actually belong to the town, but instead Middlefield Federated Church.

### Presentation of Potential Ideas for Middlefield's Future

Jim Irish had prepared a list of possible projects that had been sent out to everyone and noted that they need to realize that they can't afford to complete all of the projects. He added that the slide presentation will be put up on the website and a Survey Monkey will be sent out to gather opinions on the projects.

Mr. Irish began with the fire house project which the committee has been working on for over a year. Two million dollars of grant money has been received for this project and they continue to search for more money. The next project would be sidewalks down Main Street, perhaps even down to Peckham Park. This was looked at back in 2015 and the cost has been updated. Robin Newton had told Mr. Irish that a new grant opportunity will be coming up in August. A second

access road should be added at Lake Beseck and is really a safety issue. The trolley trail walking path at Peckham Park could be extended over to Strickland Road.

Mr. Irish added that one of the main targets for economic development would be on Route 66, but serious businesses will require water and/or sewer. There are different options for extending the sewer lines from Middletown. Economic development could also expand on Route 147 or Baileyville Road and the sewer line could be expanded in that area as well. Moving on, Mr. Irish noted that Middletown Transit just merged with Nine Town Transit and are in the process of creating routes. It may make sense to have a bus line coming down Main Street, with several stops. Solar energy is another possibility and they have looked at the possibility of putting a solar array at the transfer station along with Durham. Unfortunately, it turned out to offer a very good return. It does make sense to continue to pursue this though.

There is also a plot of town-owned land off Hubbard Street, which is currently open space, however it may be possible to have it be commercial space as water and sewer are accessible. John Lyman School should also be discussed with the Board of Education. There had been a church interested in the property, but Mr. Irish wasn't sure if they were still interested. They did not feel that it was a central location to be used for town activities. The town does have right of first refusal on the Reedy property near Peckham Park and that would complete the park.

Mr. Irish explained that technology exists to have sewer as a packaged waste treatment plan and that may be a way to support economic development on Main Street. Mr. Irish added that the town actually owns quite a bit of property at Lake Beseck and those could possibly be combined to create residential lots.

Jim Irish added that Middlefield is a recreational center in the central part of Connecticut and ideas to boost that would be an ice cream trail and a golf invitational with three different courses. The pavilion at Peckham Park is starting to show its age and repairs are needed. Another idea would be to pave the walking path around Peckham Park. Another Parks and Recreation idea would be to find swimming facilities beyond Lake Beseck, possibly at Camp Nerden.

Affordable housing is an area where the State of Connecticut is legislating that each town must have some degree of affordable housing. Middlefield has very little available and needs to begin to take a look at it. The state may begin to withhold some funding if it is not addressed. Jim Irish explained that a survey of the town's roads was done in 2021 and collector roadways were found to be structurally inadequate. The culvert on Lake Shore Drive is currently underway, hopefully being completed later this summer.

Lakeview Estates sewer lines back up into basements due to pipe size limitations. This could be remedied by a sewer surge tank. An herbicide treatment is being done this summer at Lake Beseck for Eurasian Milfoil and others will need to be done as well. Another issue at the lake is blue/green algae which is caused by phosphorus and there are new treatments for that.

Another idea would be to create a recreational area for dirt bikes and quads in Middlefield. It has also been suggested to have a farmers' market in Middlefield. There is a significant amount of open space in Middlefield and they need to continue looking at protection and acquisition of open space. The Coginchaug River flows through Middlefield and there is a good-sized flood plain that could possibly be reduced or modified. Bob Yamartino added that the Coginchaug River is the only river in Connecticut that runs south to north and goes through eight communities before ending at the Connecticut River. Thirty percent of the watershed of that river is located in Middlefield and 80 percent of the land in Middlefield drains into the river. Mr. Yamartino believes that with proper development around the river, Middlefield could become a center of ecotourism in the state.

Jim Irish continued with the idea of anaerobic digestion of organic waste which is typically used on farms to produce energy. This may also be an idea for a collection of towns. Bike lanes through town have been talked about as well. The rejuvenation of Main Street, including additional shops with potential mixed-use buildings, could bring energy and liveliness to the area.

The town owns property on Coe Hill between Jackson Hill Road and Route 66 which could use some maintenance. With that maintenance, there could possibly be some recreational uses in the area. It has also been suggested to install a gazebo or bandstand in the center of town. A suggestion was also made to develop a blight ordinance in town that would allow enforcement, but blight would need to be clearly defined.

Jim Irish summarized that this slide presentation will be available on the website for anyone to review.

#### Member discussions/additional ideas

Carol Bufithis explained that they would like to open the meeting up for any questions and also asked if the commission members have other ideas.

Anne Olszewski would like to see the town purchase the green. Jen Huddleston noted that the Economic Development Commission has been discussing the idea of marketing the town. Visitors come into town to eat, shop, stay and play. The EDC would like to see signage around town. Ms. Huddleston also believes that there should be more places for people to stay and more housing options should be encouraged. Jen Huddleston also thanked the Board of Selectmen for having this discussion.

Lisa McCabe thought that a good place to start would be with a vision for the town. Bob Yamartino stated there is a Plan of Conservation and Development which spells out how development is integrated with conservation, but probably needs to be redone. He stated that the

goal of tonight's meeting is to find out what everyone wants to see Middlefield look like and reiterated that the people in the room are the leadership of the community and the group that can plan the future of the town. He added that the town was recently delisted from the Audubon Society's Tourism Path and he would like to see it back on that list.

Sue D'Orvilliers felt that some things need to be done in the Community Center, including signage. Charlie Zieminski agreed that signage is important and suggested some type of nickname for the town, something like the Heart of Connecticut. He added that there are probably more horses in Middlefield per capita than any other town in the state which gives the potential for horse shows and riding events. He cautioned that they need to be very careful with sewage systems as it may create an influx of businesses and apartments.

Michael Skelps thanked the Board of Selectmen for including everyone in this process and added that they really need to talk about benefits to people rather than features of the town. He would be interested in seeing the vision for the Middlefield of 25 years from now be articulated. Mr. Skelps felt that a lot of very interesting projects were proposed but they can potentially be very expensive and that will take development and welcoming businesses as well as encouraging reasonable residential growth. One of the key components of his vision for Middlefield is affordability, keeping the mill rate in check and taxes down. Carol Bufithis reminded everyone that grant money is available and they need to be ready.

Mary Wolak agreed with the idea of a nickname to go along with the vision which would allow for promotional items and activities. She also believes the town needs some kind of better security in the town buildings.

Bob Yamartino summarized the ideas that were presented and added that he has crafted a letter to the DOT to ask for signage for Middlefield, noting the year-round events that happen here in town. He also agreed with the concerns about developing sewers and have asked the EDC to work with Planning and Zoning on development issues. Jen Huddleston read the EDC's draft vision, "we envision Middlefield as a diverse and sustainable community that supports our residents and businesses while welcoming visitors to our historic, scenic, and playful community." The mission of the EDC is "to proactively promote and foster the Town of Middlefield's long-term economic health in a way that supports and grows the tax base, while maintaining the community's rural character and residents' quality of life." Ms. Huddleston explained that the EDC is trying to strategic how they can best build the tax base by welcoming businesses, but not sacrificing the bucolic nature of the town. They are working to develop Route 66 as much as they can, but because of the wetlands along that road, a sewer and water line becomes more necessary. She also noted that the existing industrial parks are great as they are tucked in places that no one sees.

Lucy Petrella felt that Glastonbury is a perfect example of how to fit businesses into town that is very well-designed. She also suggested possibly selling branded merchandise to kick off the

campaign. Marc D'Orvilliers felt that it was important to look to the future, but the town has to remember its past and look to leverage that. He suggested signage noting locations that previously existed.

Another member of the audience noted that Middlefield is the same size as Cromwell and asked if everyone wanted Middlefield to look like Cromwell. John Giammatteo added that Middlefield is larger than Chester and asked if everyone would want downtown Middlefield to look like downtown Chester.

Charlie Zieminski suggested asking Zygo to run a magnet school for optics and engineering. David Lowry noted that eight or nine items on the list pertain to the center of town. There had been a plan for doing river improvements at one time, but it was shot down because someone complained that they wouldn't be able to canoe the river. He mentioned that people really don't know when they are in town or not. Mr. Lowry felt that Middlefield has much more to offer than Durham does and always will, including Powder Ridge, Lyman's and golfing. He felt that sidewalks would help the center of town immensely.

Another member of the public felt that a challenge is the fact that the recreational destinations are so spread out from the town center. He felt that resources should go to the town center, but they need to try to tie the destinations to the town center which can't be done with sidewalks.

A member of the public asked if there was a way to put a cost to each of the projects presented tonight and another mentioned that grants will be available for some things and not others. Mary Wolak felt that anaerobic waste management was a good idea, especially with the cost of tipping fees and recycling. Charlie Zieminski noted that the composting program in Southington is environmentally unsound, but DEEP will not allow DMIAAB to compost on property. Marc D'Orvilliers added that marketing and advertising are crucial.

### Next Steps

Carol Bufithis reviewed that they will set up a Survey Monkey and she encouraged everyone to let all of this information percolate. She asked everyone to think about what they would like to get involved in as an individual and as a board or commission.

Bob Yamartino encouraged any members of the public to email their comments or questions to [MiddlefieldsFuture@MiddlefieldCT.org](mailto:MiddlefieldsFuture@MiddlefieldCT.org) and they will be incorporated into the minutes. He asked that everyone include their name and address. He added that they are hoping to have the next meeting in two to three months where they will look to develop a grid showing relatively high-cost projects vs. low-cost projects, projects that have the largest potential for grant funding and which don't, which projects can be done in the short-term and which ones are longer-term, which projects have the heaviest number of obstacles and the least, and which projects are centered in one group and which ones need multiple boards and commissions. They will then

ask everyone to look at which projects they want to pursue or don't want to pursue, which ones fall within their purview and any individuals who would like to step up to lead a project.

Jim Irish explained that the Survey Monkey will include each of the ideas presented tonight with a series of questions. The survey will be a clickable link that anyone in town can take. It was suggested to create a QR code for people to scan. It was also suggested to let non-residents take the survey as well.

Bob Yamartino thanked everyone for coming tonight and for all the work they have done over many years serving the community.

#### Adjournment

***A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the special joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen with Boards and Commissions. Motion carried unanimously.***

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First

## [External] Idea: Safety #1 Priority

Fran

Wed 6/21/2023 6:44 PM

To: Middlefields Future <[middlefieldsfuture@middlefieldct.org](mailto:middlefieldsfuture@middlefieldct.org)>;

The idea of bringing more business and visitors to Middlefield is a great idea.

However, I am VERY concerned about the many drivers blowing through red lights at the 4-way traffic light at Jackson Hill Road and Meriden Rd.

This issue already put drivers who are unfamiliar with the area at great risk.

I traveled this way to work for years. Literally seen 3 to 4 cars running a red light, one after the other.

We need cameras or a Police officer at this intersection, not occasionally, but on a regular basis.

Thank you for your consideration.

Frances Gudelski

Sent from my iPhone



[External]

roberta curtis

Wed 6/21/2023 6:08 PM

To: Middlefields Future <[middlefieldsfuture@middlefieldct.org](mailto:middlefieldsfuture@middlefieldct.org)>;

Middlefield Future

Hello, I would like to see bathrooms provided @ Beseck Beach with sinks to wash hands. I also loved the public transit idea and thought it would be nice to have a pick up/ drop off stop @ the Lake, perhaps @ the parking lot across from the bakery. It would be nice to be able to catch a bus to go to Price Chopper, Big Lot, downtown Middletown & Saybrook Rd Medical Complexes. This could be a win win, cutting down on pollution & providing a quick way to travel to these destinations. Sincerely, Roberta Curtis

Sent from my Metro By T-Mobile 4G LTE Android Device  
[Get Outlook for Android](#)

[External] high priority

Lisa Irish

Tue 6/20/2023 8:44 PM

To: Middlefields Future <[middlefieldsfuture@middlefieldct.org](mailto:middlefieldsfuture@middlefieldct.org)>;

Hello, I just attended the 6/20 program about Middlefield's Future through Zoom. I wish to extend an opinion here and will use Survey monkey and any other resource to raise this project as a **PRIORITY** for your consideration.

I am speaking of creating an alternative entrance/exit for the Beseck Lake community. As you know, if Lake Shore Drive is blocked off, the residents cannot go out for medical care nor can ambulances or police come into the west side of the lake. I do not know how many people that is who will be cut off, but I am told it is a significant number.

While the other ideas of economic development, town identity and improvement, etc, are valuable, **THIS** is a matter of **SAFETY** and should be a top priority on the list of projects.

Thank you for all your hard work and thank you for protecting the citizens of Middlefield, no matter where they live!

Lisa Irish