



TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY

Library Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 14, 2022 – 4:30 P.M.

Present: Rita H. Smith - Chairman
Peter Vaccarelli – Vice Chairman
Mary Veillette
Diane Giuditta
John Moriarty
Meg Vance

Also Present: Rachel Primus, Recording Clerk
Jo-Ann LoRusso, Library Director

Absent:

Rita Smith called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 4:30 P.M. Rita Smith welcomed Meg Vance.

Approval of June 7, 2022 Meeting Minutes

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Peter Vaccarelli and seconded by Diane Giuditta to **APPROVE** the June 7, 2022 meeting minutes.

Trustee Reports

- **Treasurer's Report**

Mary Veillette handed a copy to the trustees, and read it into the record. There were five brick purchases in the Brick Sales and room naming opportunities account during June 1 through August 31, 2022.

Total brick sales to date = \$53,735.00

Total expenses to date = \$29,813.45

Balance in Fund 61 (Brick Sales and Room Naming Opportunities account) = \$23,921.55.

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Diane Guiditta and seconded by John Moriarty to **APPROVE** the Treasurer's Report.

- **Secretary's Report**

None

- **Director's Report**

JoAnn Lorusso said everyone received a packet and the statistics were included. She reviewed the August statistics. The collection size is 74,584 and the monthly circulation is 3,537. She said they will be adjusting the format of the report. JoAnn Lorusso reviewed the calendar of events. She noted the library will now be open on Saturdays from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM. These hours changed after Labor Day and will be in effect until Memorial Day. She said the fall story time is now being held in person. She said they are still doing the book and science

explorers as well as the scavenger hunts. They are doing everything in person now. The library is equipped with an air filtration system and they are hoping to get back to how things used to be. The library is no longer offering Zoom.

JoAnn Lorusso said that the Fit 345 Grant was a success. The library offered an 8 week series of exercise classes to help reduce stress. Every week there was a different activity. The library received \$2,000.00 from the State Library Summer Enrichment grant. The participants received self-care kits. JoAnn Lorusso said it was well attended and felt it was money well spent. They plan to offer it again next year. For the summer programs they had Maritime and Mystic Aquarium bring live animals. It was tricky to come up with a system at first, but it all worked out. Diane Giuditta said it was a great event.

Middlebury Neighbors magazine showcased the library in their September issue. On page 14 they added the historic overview of the library which captured the past, present and the future.

JoAnn Lorusso said the article increased their brick sales.

The Palace Project is a non-profit digital platform for public libraries offering a free digital collection. It has replaced the former e-Go digital platform. Palace communicates with the Libby App. The State Library has the say on purchases.

JoAnn Lorusso accepted a second term with the CT State Library Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development. This gives the committee a perspective on what libraries need. She feels it is beneficial to be on the committee.

JoAnn Lorusso stated the Technology Services Librarian job title and job description was replaced with a new title and description as a Digital Marketing and Technology Coordinator. This was approved by the Board of Selectmen.

JoAnn Lorusso said the adult computer stations were updated to Windows 10. There are three more computers in the building that need to be updated.

JoAnn Lorusso showed the new updated Middlebury Library website. It now includes all the planned events. The Facebook and Instagram accounts are also up and running.

JoAnn Lorusso said the part time Library Specialist position was unfilled since Covid-19. Now that in person services are increasing, they need to reinstate this position. They will also be advertising the position of Children's Librarian full time, 37.5 hours a week position. They would like to be selective on this one.

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Meg Vance and seconded by John Moriarty to **APPROVE** the Director's Report.

Old Business

- **Discussion on Vendors for Brick Fundraising**

Rita Smith said at the last meeting in June the board reviewed several different brick companies. She gave a brief background on the fundraiser. She noted that they have been using the same vendor since it started. She showed the board some sample bricks they received from a new company. Everyone liked the brick, color and font used.

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Diane Giuditta and seconded by Meg Vance to **USE** Bricks R Us out of Miami, burgundy color, for future brick purchases.

New Business

None

Public Comment

None

Adjournment

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Peter Vaccarelli and seconded by Meg Vance to

ADJOURN to meeting at 4:53 PM.

These minutes are submitted subject to approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Primus

Recording Clerk

Attachments

Cc: Library Board of Trustees

Library Director

Town Clerk

TREASURER'S REPORT

TO: Middlebury Public Library Board of Trustees

FROM: Mary C. Veillette, Treasurer

DATE: September 13, 2022

**RE: Report for the period June 1, 2022 through
August 31, 2022.**

There were five brick purchases for \$625 in the Brick Sales and Room Naming Opportunities accounts during the period June 1, 2022 through August 31, 2022.

Total Brick Sales to date: \$53,735.00

Total Expenses to date: \$29,813.45

**Balance in Fund 61 – Brick Sales and Room Naming Opportunities
account: \$23,921.55**

Respectfully,

Mary C. Veillette, Treasurer

To: Middlebury Public Library Board of Trustees

From: Jo-Ann LoRusso, Library Director

RE: Director's Report

September 13, 2022

2 Pages

Statistics for August 2022

(Chart)

Calendar of Events

(Calendar)

Fit 345 Grant

The Middlebury Public Library offered an 8-week series of exercise classes at the library with certified fitness instructors from Active & Anchored, Naugatuck, CT, and the Great Waterbury YMCA, Waterbury, CT, to help children in grades 3 to 5 improve their mental wellness during COVID-19. This \$2,000 State Library Summer Enrichment grant allowed the Library to help children learn new ways to relieve stress and improve their mental wellbeing. Self-care kits and supplemental materials were also purchased for children to continue learning about the importance of wellness and self-care at zero cost to the Library.

Final Report filed 8/31/2022

Middlebury Neighbors

(September 2022 Issue)

Middlebury Neighbors magazine's September 2022 issue featured the Middlebury Public Library's past, present, and future vision. The Legacy Brick Campaign was included in the article increasing our brick sales to date.

The Palace Project

The Palace Project is a new, non-profit digital platform for public libraries offering a free digital collection of more than 11,000 openly licensed titles. This digital platform replaced the former Connecticut State Library's e-Go digital platform.

The Palace Project allows public libraries to provide equitable access to digital knowledge in a single app thus the name palace. "It bestows nobility on people who otherwise couldn't afford a shred of it." *Eric Klinenberg*

Connecticut State Library's Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development (ACLPD): Second Term

At the request of the Connecticut State Library: Division of Library Development, I have accepted a second term on the ACLPD committee. The mission of the committee is to provide the State Library Board and staff with advice, perspective, and communication from the library community on matters relating to the State Library's various program and service responsibilities. This committee consists of 19 members that are centrally involved in all major planning efforts undertaken by the State Library with respect to statewide library and information services.

Technology Services Librarian: Position Update

(Svedrovic Resignation Letter)

The Technology Services Librarian job title and description was replaced by the new job title and description- Digital Marketing and Technology Coordinator. This was approved by the Board of Selectmen on July 5, 2022 following a recent resignation to reflect our current library's digital marketing needs.

Digital Marketing and Technology Coordinator

(Job Description)

Digital Marketing and Technology Coordinator -new hire Melissa Lefebvre

- Library Website redesigned and enhanced
- Adult Computer Stations: Upgraded to a Windows 10 operating system and firewall protection
- Social Media Campaign- Instagram and Facebook

Part Time Library Specialist- Cataloging/Circulation

(Job Description)

New Hire – pending

The part time library specialist position is a non-benefitted up to 19 hours per week position. It was unfilled during Covid-19. As the Library increases in person services, we have a need to reinstate this position.

Children's Librarian Employment Opportunity

(D'Onofrio Resignation Letter)

(Children's Librarian Job Description)

August 2022

Collection Size	74,584
Monthly Circulation	3,537
Active Cards	2,400
New Residents	22
Computer Usage	67 Patrons

	Number of Programs	Number of Attendees
Adult Programs	5	19
General Programs	2	487
YA/Teen Programs	0	0
Children's Programs	6	79
Family Programs	21	200
Total	34	785

Jessica Svedrovic
33 Morton Road
Middlebury, CT 06762

June 23, 2022

Jo-Ann LoRusso
Library Directo
Middlebury Public Library
30 Crest Road
Middlebury, CT 06762

Dear Jo-Ann,

After much consideration, I am writing to inform you that I am resigning from my position as the Technology/Teen Services Librarian, effective July 15, 2022. This was not an easy decision to make but I was offered a position that will further advance my career. Thank you for all the opportunities for professional and personal growth you have provided me. I am grateful for all the experience I have gained while working at the Middlebury Public Library.

If I can be of any further help please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jessica Svedrovic', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jessica Svedrovic

Town of Middlebury

DIGITAL MARKETING AND TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR

This position is responsible for the continued innovation, development, implementation and management of digital informational services and programs for young adults. Reports directly to the Library Director. Primary project manager for all digital content including not limited to catalog system, website, social media, digital collection development, statistical reports, as well as the continued efficiency of existing hardware and software systems.

Identifies and develops creative young adult programs and resources in support of the digital needs of our community while promotes the library using the website and social media.

Duties and Responsibilities: Provides technical assistance and training to staff and patrons; monitors and provides collection development and selection of resources both electronically and physically for young adults; works with the Library Director to make recommendations for short- and long-range planning related to digital content, future systems, and new technology.

Requirements:

- Master's degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS) from an accredited institution
- Knowledge of methods for collecting, managing and analyzing data
- Experience implementing software upgrades
- Experience communicating clearly and effectively, by writing and orally, with groups and individuals about complex processes.
- Experience managing electronic resources and collection development for young adults
- Experience in website development
- Knowledge of emerging technologies related to digital content
- Experience in digital marketing-social media
- Experience in instructional technology for all ages
- Experience in creating and executing virtual programs

This is a full-time benefitted position (40 hrs. per week including one evening and Saturday rotation). The Town of Middlebury offers a comprehensive benefit package.

Salary \$48,000 anticipated start date July 18, 2022.

Interested applicants should send cover letter and resume to Town of Middlebury Public Library- Attention: Library Director Jo-Ann LoRusso jlorusso@middlebury-ct.org

Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

Employment is contingent upon a successful completion of a pre-employment background check, a preemployment drug screening, and a 6-month probationary period.

Physical Demands:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential function.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit for extended periods of time. The employee frequently is required to stand, walk, sit, bend, stoop, and kneel. The employee is frequently required to reach with hands and arms. The employee must occasionally lift and /or move up to 25 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include vision, distance vision, and ability to adjust focus.

Job Description replaces TECHNOLOGY SERVICES LIBRARIAN (Approved February 3, 2014)

Approved by the Board of Selectmen

July 5, 2022

Middlebury Public Library

PART TIME LIBRARY SPECIALIST – CATALOGING/CIRCULATION

This position is responsible for providing technical services for all materials- cataloging, covering, labeling, and circulating of materials. Reports directly to the Library Director. Other duties would include working at the Information desk and assisting patrons as needed. Must have considerable knowledge of technology.

Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree
- Knowledge of methods for collecting, managing and analyzing data;
- Experience working with the public;
- Experience planning, organizing and managing multiple tasks;
- Experience with current technology
- Experience working collaboratively as part of a team and in a changing environment;
- Experience communicating clearly and effectively, by writing and orally, with groups and individuals about complex processes.

This is a part-time non-benefitted position (up to 19 hrs. per week including one evening as needed and Saturday rotation).

Hourly Rate: \$15 per hour anticipated start date July 18, 2022.

Interested applicants should send cover letter and resume to Town of Middlebury Public Library- Attention: Library Director Jo-Ann LoRusso jlorusso@middlebury-ct.org

Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

Employment is contingent upon a successful completion of a pre-employment background check, a preemployment drug screening, and a 6-month probationary period.

Physical Demands:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential function.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit for extended periods of time. The employee frequently is required to stand, walk, sit, bend, stoop, and kneel. The employee is frequently required to reach with hands and arms. The employee must occasionally lift and /or move up to 25 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include vision, distance vision, and ability to adjust focus.

As Approved by the Board of Selectmen on 7/5/22

August 22, 2022

Dear Jo-Ann and the Town of Middlebury,

Please consider this letter as my notice of resignation from my position as Children's Librarian with the Town of Middlebury, with my last day being September 2nd, 2022. The last year has been full of learning and new experiences, but I am ready to move on to the next stage of my life. Thank you for the opportunities that you have given me during my time as the Children's Librarian.

Sincerely,

Carmela M. D'Onofrio

Children's Librarian

This position is responsible for promoting literacy to school aged children- preschool to high school to foster a community service environment that harnesses technology creatively to deliver information, resources and services to our youth. Reports directly to the Library Director.

Duties and Responsibilities: Provides innovative age-appropriate literacy programs virtually and in person, oversees the collection development in alignment with the local school system to ensure a comprehensive collection, and supports digital needs of our younger community members.

Responsibilities include but not limited to administrative assignments including staff scheduling, statistics and program reports. Assists at the Information desk, performs other duties as assigned by the Library Director including making appropriate day to day decisions as needed within the framework of the organizational mission and the policies and procedures of the Town of Middlebury.

Minimum qualifications, requirements, skill, and ability:

- Master's degree in Library Science (MLS) from an accredited institution
- Knowledge of methods for collecting, managing, and analyzing data; including but not limited to knowledge of library reference and cataloging methods.
- Experience in gathering statistical information.
- Experience training, mentoring, and working with a library community of all ages.
- Experience planning, organizing, and managing multiple tasks.
- Experience in creating and executing virtual programming environments.
- Proficient use of current technology
- Experience communicating clearly and effectively, by writing and orally, with groups and individuals especially children.
- 3 Years' experience managing children's collection development.
- Experience in digital marketing-social media
- Experience in storytelling.
- Artistic ability

September 2022

MIDDLEBURY

Bringing People Together

Neighbors

MIDDLEBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Middlebury Public Library



Best Version Media

Photo by Uniquely Yours Photography, LLC



Middlebury Public Library

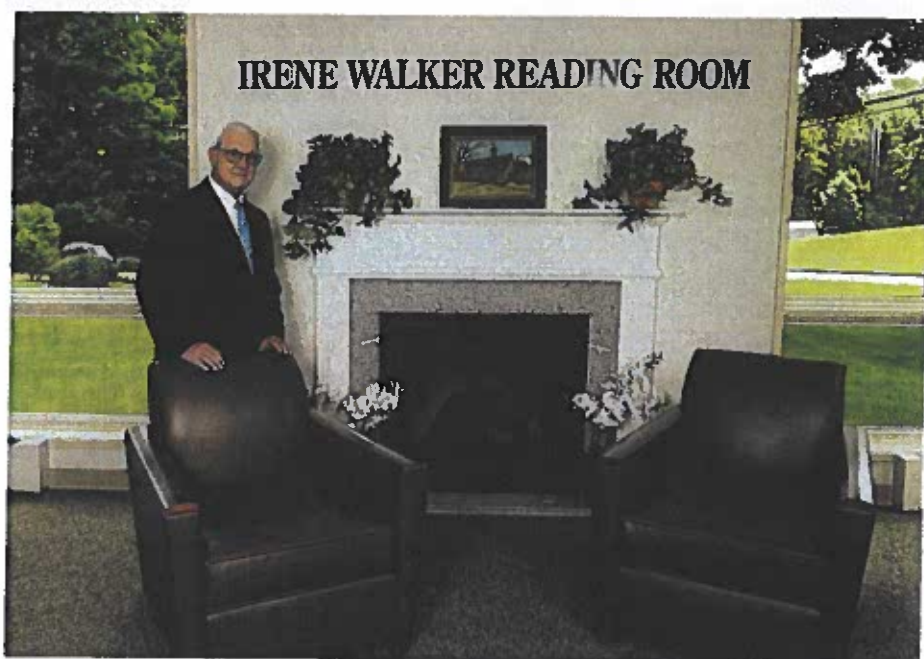
By Adrienne Brown | Photos by Uniquely Yours Photography, LLC

The captivating world that is the Middlebury Public Library begins at its entrance just beyond its doors. Opening those doors, opens your world and starts with a library card. For young residents old enough to write their names, their very first library card awaits. Putting the card to good use means accessing books, magazines, movies, CD's, ebooks, eaudiobooks, virtual programs and classes teaching new crafts and hobbies, offerings in any public library in the state, a 24/7 online library, reading clubs, storyhours, family and kid-friendly programs, and a beautiful corner in the community to sit quietly and be an active participant in learning.

Middlebury's Public Library greets with a smile. Literally. We entered and were welcomed with a smile and a hello by a woman behind an approachable desk. The well-lit and inviting spaces around the central desk can offer either respite, revelry, or research. The result of the library's 2013 renovation (funded by a Connecticut State grant, public donations, and town funds) marks an edifice made for engaging learners and readers in its many comfortable nooks with its many different functions in its 21,428 square feet. Libraries house books, but more accurately, libraries house history and adventure and knowledge and community. In Middlebury, the public library sits as a welcoming home for life-long learning no matter the age and does this really well.

Its mission statement makes clear its mindful and daily objective. "Middlebury Public Library's mission is to provide information, resources and services that educate, enlighten, entertain, and inspire our community to learn at every age. Lifelong learning opportunities begins in our Children's, Teens, and Adult collections, services, and programs and ends with a continual evaluation of community needs and assessments." Community needs meet satisfaction whether time is spent at a craft table, a computer terminal, a charging station, a multi-purpose table, or in a study room, a café, a meeting room, a children's corner, a teen room, or the Irene Walker Reading Room. The many windows allow for sunshine while the everything else allows for erudition.

Patrons learn and grow alongside the library itself as evidenced by its director's passion for what she does. Jo-Ann LoRusso, MLS Library Director, began as a part-time hire to assist in the children's area in 2006. Recognizing she was where she wanted to be, Jo-Ann enrolled and graduated from Southern Connecticut State University with a Master of Library Science (MLS) before serving as Technology Librarian from 2009-2012. A unanimous vote by Library Board of Trustees appointed Jo-Ann as Library Director in July of 2012. Jo-Ann's enthusiasm for what and who the library is became quickly evident as she made clear the many library advocates helping to fulfill its mission and support its goals.



She pays homage to the relatively few (9), given the 228 years of its existence (1794), directors who paved the path she walks: Mary Hine (1896-1904), A.W. Buell, Fred Chamberlain, Jeannette Dexter, Delia Bronson (1929-1972), Barbara Carson (1972-1983), Laura de Francesco (1983-1985), Barbara Brown (1985-1990), and Jane Gallagher (1990 – 2012).

She declares her appreciation for her team: Carmela D'Onofrio, MLIS Children's Services; Jennifer Minchella, MLS Adult Services; Jami Richardson, MS Librarian Assistant; Tacey Dietlmeier, MLS Librarian Assistant; Mary Culhane, MS Librarian Assistant.

She acknowledges the support and value in the Library Board of Trustees who are currently: Rita H. Smith, Chairman; Peter Vaccarelli; Diane Giuditta; John Moriarty; and Mary Veillette.

Understanding the library stands as an integral, necessary, and consistently contributing part of Middlebury with a past and a future beyond any of the names and faces of its current custodians. Jo-Ann shares. "We continually strive

to serve the community by offering a platform for learning in a rapidly changing world of technology. Our services are offered in person and virtually due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, during which Middlebury Public Library never closed. We pivoted to a full-service model we call Select from Home. The staff filled material requests patrons picked up outside. This curbside service is in practice today and is now offered by Connecticut Public Libraries across the state."

"We continue to host free hybrid programs and services promoting literacy for all ages. This includes book discussions, story times, e-books, and seasonal programs both virtually and in person. Throughout the pandemic, we offered free Wi-Fi throughout the library grounds, outdoor and remote programming for all ages, remote printing, digital downloads of eBooks and eAudiobooks, jigsaw puzzles, and government tax forms. We continue to address challenges to Middlebury residents and surrounding towns that utilize our services. We closely monitor and adjust as needed."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

By Jo-Ann LoRusso, MLS Library Director

According to Librarian Delia Bronson's book *History of Middlebury* and updated by Library Directors: The organizational meeting for a library in Middlebury was held September 22, 1794, at the home of Benjamin Munson. The list of "proprietors" was a long one. Each "proprietor" paid 10 shillings for a share, which holding permitted him to borrow one book every two months. To retain that privilege, he had to pay one shilling annually. He also had to pay whatever fines might be imposed for such things as a torn page, dirt or, more frequently, for grease spots caused by a flickering candle. For more than a century, the library was conducted for its "proprietors" only. Occasionally a bylaw was amended as on January 4, 1877, when it was voted that the "proprietors" be allowed to draw one book a month instead of every two months, but it was against the rules for a "proprietor" to lend a book to anyone else. As a Proprietorship enterprise, the library had been conducted in the basement of the First Congregational Church building located on the West end of the Green, and later over Scott's store, near the present gate of Westover School.

On October 5th 1896, the "proprietors" acted to turn over their books to a new Public Library to be supported by the town. Space was made available in the basement of the new Town Hall. The town's financial aid was on the modest side. Fortunately, even in those days, there was state aid, and contributions of books and money helped the project. When the new directors held their first meeting on October 6, 1896, things were better. The Public Library inherited 400 volumes, town

residents contributed 300 volumes, a friend gave \$200.00, and cases and pictures were given to the project. The town agreed to make an annual allotment of \$25.00 which would be matched by the state. The first Board of Directors held its first meeting on October 6th.

Delia Bronson came to Middlebury in 1919 as a teacher and her teaching career extends over 37 years. In 1929, when Delia Bronson took over the duties, the library contained almost 900 books and had a yearly circulation of 537. When the Town Hall burned in 1935, the entire library was saved and moved to the old Center School which now is the Middlebury Historical Society. Instead of one book a month, now entire families take as many as 20 books for two weeks, children choosing theirs while parents make their own selection. The library now had over 2,000 active borrowers, and 18,016 volumes. Mrs. Bronson retired from teaching in 1956 but continued to work in the library until 1969 when Barbara Carson was hired as librarian.

Miss Barbara Carson was born in Portland, Oregon but grew up in New England. She completed Nursing school and went into service in World War II as a flight nurse. After she retired from the Air Force, she went to Florida State University for her Master's in Library Science. She worked in Pierce Florida at St. Lucie-Okeechobee Regional Library for approximately one year and nine months at Village Library in Farmington as an Adult Services Librarian.

The citizens of Middlebury, calling on their legacy from the early proprietors of the library pre - 1896, formed a committee with plans to relocate the library to property located on the corner of Crest Road and Whittemore Road. The new library was to be built on the approximately 4 acres of land which had been donated to the town with the limitation for educational purposes or a library. A new building program was started in 1969/1970 and the current library building was constructed in 1972 entirely from donations received from a new set of proprietors.

In 1971, the new 7,000 square foot facility on Crest Road was completed. No town money was used in the construction, but an operating budget was provided by the town. Pledges were raised to cover the \$462,500 cost of the building construction.

The new library was a one-story structure with attractive landscaping and adequate parking facilities. The building included an enlarged stack area and reading space with a special area for children and a reference area. The building had been planned so expansion would be possible.

In 1978, space became tight and money was again raised to put on a 3,000-foot addition. The addition included a community meeting room and additional space for new Media; the Larkin Room was added in 1981. In 1980, a microfilm Viewer/Printer were bought with federal revenue sharing funds. This enables the library to purchase microfilmed copies of specific magazines and help with their storage problem.

In 1980, Barbara Carson retired and Laura de Francesco was hired. She greatly expanded the children's section including the hiring of a children's librarian. During the 1980's cassettes, videos, and records were added. Barbara Brown was hired as head librarian in 1985.

In 1990, the library faced the need for enlargement. In particular, more staff and storage area were needed. The cost of construction, furnishings and fees were \$230,000. In addition, it was necessary that \$30,000 be secured to defray the expense of any loans and

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supplemental fund-raising costs for a two-year volunteer giving program. Thus, a total of \$260,000 was raised in pledges to assure the construction of these expanded facilities. Also, in 1990, an automated circulation system was introduced to the library. Jane Gallagher was hired as Head Librarian/Library Director. The library was still growing and needing to make changes due to new technology. The first public computer was added in 1994.

During the fall of 1996 and into 1997, the Middlebury Public Library was expanded. In the main area, 5,000 square feet of floor space was added and on the lower level, 3,400 square feet. Besides expanding the children's area, adding stack space and room for technology, several maintenance needs were taken care of. The library was kept open during the renovation closing for a short time in June to lay down carpet and put the finishing touches on the building. The official open house took place October 19, 1997. Jane Gallagher retired on July 16th 2012.

Jo-Ann LoRusso was unanimously voted by Library Board of Trustees to become the new director on July 16, 2012. Jo-Ann had previously served the Middlebury community as Technology Librarian 2009-2012. She was hired part

time January 6, 2006, to assist in the Children's area.

January 2013 renovations to Crest Road took place. This was due to a Connecticut State grant, public donations, and town funds. While the library on Crest Road was closed during the expansion, a temporary library was set up at the old Timex building on Park Road for approximately three-fourths of a year. This renovation added a Teen Reading room, quiet reading area and five new study rooms in addition to other changes. A covered portico was installed over the renovated main entrance. Our Connecticut History Room dedicated to preserving our local history and surrounding towns was enhanced with a mural of Fenn's Pond in 2013 by local artist Sue Healy.

The library on Crest Road reopened in November 2013.

The Middlebury Public Library continues to raise funding for library improvements through fundraising and public donations. Our current fundraising efforts consists of the Middlebury Public Library's Legacy Brick Campaign. It allows our patrons to be a part of our history. Forms for a personalized brick are available at the information desk. Bricks will continue to be added to our front entrance. For more information, please contact the library or visit our website.



Architectural Review of Commercial Buildings

By Terry McAuliffe - Chairman, Economic Development Commission

COMMUNITY

How does the Economic Development Commission decide whether a new or renovated building is a good "fit" for the area of Middlebury in which it will be situated?

This can't simply be the opinion of the commissioners, who are asked to send a recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission for site plan approvals. There needs to be something more tangible than opinion, especially so when you consider the town is composed of seven distinct business areas ranging from suburban to almost semi-rural in character. A "one size fits all" design standard appropriate for large commercial buildings along Straits Turnpike wouldn't make any sense for more tranquil areas such as Middlebury Center, the Town Green, Judd's Corner, or the Gateway District, where traditional New England character (as it has evolved over the last 200 years) maintains a pleasing business environment that encourages visitation, increased patronage, and that "small town feel" we don't want to lose.

Designs should follow traditional New England style concepts, and modern, monolithic structures should be avoided whenever possible as they are not compatible with the desire for more historic architectural themes. This consensus is consistent with the stated goal of protecting and conserving the character of the town which has been said to be warm and semi-rural. The Commission understands that certain enterprises may wish to have a special theme, but exceptions should be kept to a minimum, and when proposed, should transition from one style to another as smoothly and seamlessly as possible.

Building facades should attempt to recreate traditional New England architecture themes and concepts. Such facades need not be exact replicas of historical Colonial, Georgian, Federal, Classical Revival,

Victorian, etc., architectural styles. However, they should exhibit the "spirit" of such designs. Facades need not be identical to abutting or neighboring structures but should be complementary to other neighboring buildings. False detailing, (e.g., mansard roofs, partial HVAC screens, truncated roof structures, etc.) should be avoided.

Building scale, massing and proportion must be considered. Larger building volumes should be broken into smaller forms to lessen the total apparent mass and provide continuity with nearby patterns. Smaller forms could include projections (e.g., overhangs, awnings, etc.) or recesses (e.g., windows) on smaller buildings, or stepping back upper levels on larger buildings.

Proportions between building height, length and width should be consistent with prevailing neighboring standards, avoiding distortion or exaggeration. Building elements (e.g., protective canopies, stairs, columns, wall or roof projections and recesses, etc.) should be of human scale at sidewalk level to encourage pedestrian use. Entrances should be strongly defined, with individual legibility for individual tenants, including an agreeable pedestrian environment, with weather protection, walking convenience and safety features.

The Commission is comprised of seven members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Commissioners are Town residents and business owners who possess a wide range of experience and expertise about Middlebury and its economy. The Commission operates in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 7-136 Municipal Economic Development Commissions. Its work focuses on conducting research on economic conditions and trends in Middlebury, promoting economic development, and supporting existing and prospective businesses.