



# TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY

## Economic Development Commission and Beautification Committee

**Special Joint Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday May 17, 2023 6:30 p.m.**  
**Shepardson Community Center, Room 26**

**Present:** Commissioner Francis Barton  
Chairman Terrence McAuliffe

**Also present** Jennifer Mahr, Greenway Comm.  
Melanie Peters  
Marj Needham  
Robert Rafford  
Maria Jose Pastor

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman McAuliffe called the meeting to order at about 6:30 pm.

### **VIDEO REPORT**

Attendees viewed and discussed a ZOOM meeting held Wednesday March 22 with Terrence McAuliffe, chairman of Middlebury EDC, ShawnaLee Kwashnak, owner of Portraits by ShawnaLee, Rudy Marconi, Ridgefield First Selectman, and Glori Norwitt, Chair of Ridgefield's Economic and Community Development Commission. The topics included beautification, civic engagement, and volunteerism.

### **DISCUSSION**

Chairman McAuliffe opened the meeting by saying that everyone is interested in beautifying, engaging with their community, and volunteering, but that it can be difficult to find people who are willing to do the work. He mentioned Middlebury's 2007 Bicentennial, where motivated people came together to run many projects and raise tens of thousands of dollars. He said that there are about 50 to 60 people in town, most of them older, who do most of the work. Mr. Barton agreed, saying that this is an example of the 80-20 rule, which states that 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people.

Mr. Barton also agreed that people are busy, but said that it's not that hard to get people involved if you really want to do it. He said that it's important to have a go-to person who is constantly asking for people to volunteer. He said that it's a constant effort, and that you have to go out and ask people.

## **SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES - Special Joint Meeting Minutes Wed. May 17, 2023**

The ability to find information about events and businesses, as well as a calendar, was missing from the town website. Ridgefield has such a website, and so does Woodbury and other towns.

Woodbury has an arts commission, and they put on many events, including concerts and sidewalk fairs, noted Jennifer Mahr. Southbury has a concert series at its gazebo and beautification projects. Why can't Middlebury do the same?

"People aren't being asked," reminded Mr. Barton. "You've got to get new members."

"The Greenway is an underutilized tool," said Jennifer Mahr. "People are out there, and you need to get them out there with a reason to gather." She mentioned several ideas, including food trucks and contests. Mr. Barton suggested that Park and Recreation would be the place to bring the ideas.

In further discussion on possible ideas, McAuliffe noted that parking along the Greenway for events was difficult, although some ideas could work wonderfully with creativity and motivation.

Other ideas were discussed, some of which didn't blossom in the past, including "restaurant week," "a taste of Middlebury" and an "arts festival."

Mr. Barton explained what the dormant Beautification Committee used to do, which included maintaining flowers at the Middlebury Recreation Association (MRA), along the trolley station, around Yale Avenue, and around Bristol Park. McAuliffe noted a rather small budget of \$2,000 for beautification. Sponsored spots were suggested to offset costs, but the leadership to get those sponsorships was acknowledged as necessary.

Mr. Barton said he would pursue reforming the Arts Commission with a possible volunteer. In discussion, several names were mentioned.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Fran Barton MOTIONED to adjourn, SECOND by Jennifer Mahr, and unanimously voted at about 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terrence McAuliffe  
Chairman—Economic Development Commission  
cc. Town Clerk, Commission Members