

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Deciding Middlebury's Future Growth

By Terry McAuliffe

Chairman, Economic Development Commission

During the December holidays I heard concerns about a project being proposed for property on Southford Road that had hitherto been mostly undisturbed, but was well known to be zoned commercially, with faded real estate signs providing the telephone number of a broker waiting for someone to be interested. Every town and city deals with public concern in its land use decisions, and Middlebury is no different.

We wrote about this in the February 2022 edition of Middlebury Neighbors, discussing the town's "Plan of Conservation and Development," which is a ten-year plan used to guide decision making, and which is the subject of extensive public input in its formulation.

This month I'd like to discuss the actual development of commercial property and the agencies and procedures involved.

Conservation Commission. Most municipalities in the State of Connecticut have demarcated areas within certain distances of a wetland or watercourse where all development is regulated by the local Conservation Commission. For development to be allowed within such a regulated area, the applicant must prove to the commission that the wetland or watercourse will not be detrimentally impacted by the development proposed.

Major development projects generally submit initial plans to the Conservation Commission and get approvals before moving forward with detailed construction plans to other commissions and agencies.

Planning and Zoning Commission. P&Z is authorized under Connecticut State Statutes to review and approve site plan applications and such reviews often includes an opportunity for public comment and public hearings, with legal notices published in local newspapers.

Factors in approval, in addition to conformance with Zoning Regulations, include a review of plans for uses and structures which may have significant impacts on traffic; municipal buildings and public services and utilities; the environment; community economics; and the Town's visual and historic character and development goals.

The **Public Works Department** will be asked for comment and approval if construction or change in use affects streets, culverts and bridges.

The **Town Engineer** reviews subdivision and site plans, excavation and grading plans, and related applications for comments on roadway, curbing, sidewalk, and drainage projects including design and construction management. He also advises on bonding and insurance requirements

The **Town Planner** is usually asked to review subdivision and site plans and applications for comments on conformance to the Plan of Conservation and Development.

The Connecticut Division of Traffic Engineering [**CTDOT**] manages, directs and coordinates traffic designs, studies, and investigations for State roadways. It performs traffic analyses, recommends improvements, reviews major traffic generators, and investigates traffic-related issues for the State

Traffic Commission. It reviews the plans, specifications and estimates for maintenance and protection of traffic, traffic signals, signing and pavement markings for projects along state highways.

The **Water Department** reviews all water connection permits, water installation permits, grease trap permits, backflow permits, hydrant use permits, flow test, water meter installations, and water meter testing.

The Chief of the Middlebury **Police Department** may be asked to review subdivision and site plans and applications for comments on safety, citizen protection, and other matters.

The **Fire Marshal** reviews building plans prior to the permitting of commercial construction within the community in conformance with the Connecticut State Fire Safety Code.

The Chief of the Middlebury Volunteer **Fire Department** may be asked to review subdivision and site plans and applications for access of fire apparatus and other opinions.

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.