

## Former Framingham selectman not slowing down

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FRAMINGHAM - A year before Dennis Giombetti announced his retirement from the Board of Selectmen, he wrote down a list of 20 things he wanted to get done in his final year. From drafting proposals for town improvements to other projects, Giombetti's hit 18 of those initiatives as he neared his self-imposed retirement.

Giombetti would take his retirement as a step away from full-time politics, but that did not mark the end of his political career.

On Oct. 29, the former chairman of the board will sponsor his 20th and final project almost two years out of office: a gun buyback program run by the Framingham Police Department.

"I thought it was an important initiative for the community," Giombetti said. "For years I kept telling the chief whenever I saw an article about someone doing a gun buyback that maybe it is about time."

But Giombetti's "retirement" does not end there. Currently, the man "who bleeds Framingham blue," as put by a colleague, is a district liaison to Sen. Karen Spilka, D-Ashland, while also serving on the town's charter commission.

From a career that began with working for State Rep. Andrew Rodgers in the 1970s, he now finds himself aiding the chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, an important position for tackling problems statewide.

"She (Spilka) is really involved with so many different issues," said Giombetti. "So having someone like myself working in the district, staying close, and raising issues up to her on a timely basis helps her and keeps me involved with local politics."

Spilka not only appreciates Giombetti's work, she knows from working with him as a selectman that he puts residents' problems first.

"Over the years in working with Dennis, the thing that struck me first and foremost, is that he is a people person," said Spilka. "He genuinely enjoys working with and for people, and I believe he is passionate about helping people and improving the quality of life, particularly in Framingham."

Because of that passion, it was a perfect fit for both Spilka and Giombetti to bring him on her team.

"All of the skills and abilities that I saw for so many years, Dennis shines with all of the things that I want from a person who works with me and is a part of my team," said Spilka. "It is a natural for Dennis."

Although he left the Board of Selectmen in 2014, the only true departure Giombetti had from politics was in 1984, when he left Rep. Rodgers' office to take up a marketing position at Stratus Technologies. He didn't lose his passion for local government, though, and while he planned for his "retirement" in the 2000's, he decided to sit on the Framingham Finance Committee.

During his time on the committee, he advocated for the police department that he said had too few officers on the street. That issue, among others with the town at that time, prompted him to run for a seat on the town board.

"The reason why I ran for a seat on the board was because I felt like the town was going in the wrong direction," said Giombetti. "There was a lot of bickering on the board and not a clear direction in where the town wanted to go, and I thought I could bring both my political and business experience to help shape a new direction."

Over the nine years he served on the board, he emphasized public safety as well as the town's economy. During his tenure, the "hub of MetroWest" boomed with economic development as Giombetti helped establish the "Choose Framingham" movement in 2010 to attract new businesses.

Once considered by Giombetti as "not business-friendly" in terms of its strict permit and regulation laws, the town's turnaround was something that Giombetti looks back on as a highlight of his time on the board.

"It has focused the attention on how wonderful the Framingham community is," said Giombetti, "as well as the strong neighborhood that we have and the many assets. It's one of the most proud things I did on the board, which was helping to create that, and still have it be a focal point with this town."

Another project Giombetti pushed for was the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority. Ed Carr, executive director of the authority, said it took the "political courage" of Giombetti to work with Spilka and get the authority established.

Carr recalls that Giombetti was more than just pro-Framingham, putting the entire MetroWest region first, especially when it came to transportation.

"Dennis is politically savvy about things," Carr said. "He has protected me in a lot of ways from stepping in a quagmire and allowing me to be able to do my job, which is putting rolling stock on the street and move fannies around."

Carr became a friend of Giombetti during his time as a selectman, and while both worked together as colleagues, there is one day where the two agree to not compromise.

"We tend to disagree on who's going to win the Thanksgiving Day game," said Carr, a Natick High School graduate who rivals Giombetti's Framingham Flyers. "He bleeds the Framingham blue, no question."

With Giombetti's blue ink finally crossed out on his pre-retirement list, he now looks to tackle more issues for Spilka, especially women's rights, among others, that she fights for on Beacon Hill.

"I've started a new list," Giombetti laughed.

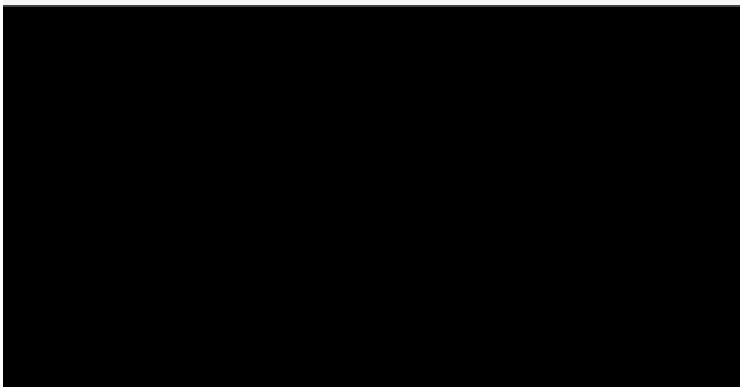


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