

WEST WINDSOR SELECTBOARD

Draft Minutes

July 21, 2010

Present: Glenn Seward, Tom Kenyon, Bruce Boedtger, Mark Nowlan, Dennis Conley, Dennis Lemire, John Cocke, Kenny Burke, Martha Harrison, Frank Brock

- 1) Call to Order – Selectboard Chair Glenn Seward called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.
- 2) Discuss Town Forest plan update with Town Forest Committee – Glenn would like to start the ball rolling on the Town Forest Plan update. Glenn said he thinks the first step is to gather public input and he asked the committee members if they want to be involved in that or if they would rather have another committee do it. Mark said he thinks that would be separate from a forestry plan. Glenn said he thinks that ultimately we will end up with a multi-use plan and asked if the committee wants to be involved in all aspects of the plan or just the forestry aspects. John said he thinks most foresters would look at it from a multi-use perspective. Mark said Ted Siegler mentioned some things in his email (dated July 18, 2010) that a forester probably wouldn't look at, such as prohibiting motorized vehicles. Regarding Ted's suggestion about identifying plants, Mark said that would cost a lot more than the committee's original plan. Glenn agreed and said he thinks the town should use whatever state assistance is available. Kenny said he thinks we should get professional advice. Mark said many town forests have "friends of" groups. Tom said he is concerned about a conflict between forestry use and recreational use. Bruce said he thinks priorities need to be established before plans can be developed. Tom said there are some sensitive areas that should not be used at all. Mark agreed. Tom said there should be funding for trail maintenance. Bruce said he sees erosion on some of the older trails that don't have water bars, including portions of the Bicentennial trail. Bruce said we should look at the whole picture and there should be some guidance and control of the various uses, including restrictions on use at certain times of the year (when muddy, etc.). Bruce said Martha found a link to a document on town forest plans that looks interesting so we don't have to reinvent the wheel. Kenny said they contacted the group that produced that document and were supposed to meet with someone but the person didn't show up. Mark said he has also contacted the Youth Corps. Dennis said he's been using a snowmobile in the town forest for 10 years. Glenn said the use policies are not clear to him but he is reviewing old minutes to try to determine if there are any policies in place and what those policies are. Glenn said he will summarize whatever policies he finds and they can be used as an interim policy. Bruce said he thinks snowmobiles are acceptable in certain areas. All agreed that there should be a combination of uses allowed in the town forest. Mark said he thinks it would be good to have a "friends of the forest" committee but he would suggest limiting the number of people on it because if there are too many different agendas, nothing will get done. Glenn suggested that the forest committee coordinate that. Frank said he likes to putt around in the town forest with his 4-wheeler and he is against banning motorized vehicles. Frank thinks there should be some trails that are open to 4-wheelers and some that are not, but right now there is no rule. Tom said it's important to specify when and where various activities can take place. Frank said gates were installed a few years ago and they're never open. Bruce said there were instances of people dumping trash back there. Frank said the town was dumping. Bruce said it wasn't the town. Tom said the town paid to have some of that stuff taken away. Tom said the highway foreman stores stuff there from time to time. Frank said there was a chain saw safety course a few years ago in the town forest and the white birch that was cut was just left

there. Frank asked why it wasn't hauled out to be used by the needy. Kenny said Mike asked him about doing the course and he said he'd like to see where the course would take place and which trees would be cut but he never heard back from Mike. Bruce said that's why we need policies. Dennis said the gates were erected by the town forest committee years ago so people wouldn't go on the trails when they were soft but the gates were supposed to be opened on June 1st every year. Dennis said after somebody dumped trash out there, the Constable asked the Selectboard to authorize keeping the gates locked all year. Dennis said he spoke against that idea because its public land and it should be open to the public. Dennis said he disagrees with #6 and #7 of Ted's email, which suggest that motorized vehicles be prohibited in the town forest. Dennis said he enjoys riding his ATV in the town forest a couple times a year. Dennis said he can't walk to all the places that he used to visit when he was younger. With 1300 acres, Dennis said, there ought to be room enough for everyone. Bruce agreed that portions of the town forest are suitable for ATVs. Bruce said he thinks there should be some controls on what goes where, but he doesn't believe in any prohibition. Glenn agreed that it's the taxpayers' land and there's more than enough room for everybody. Tom asked Dennis if he would be willing to register with the town forest so they know who's up there. Dennis said no. Dennis said he understands that ATVs are unpopular because of noise and erosion but it would seem like that 1300 acres is one place where townspeople should be able to use them. Tom said it could be useful in a forest fire to have ATV trails. Dennis agreed. Frank said he was riding on a trail in another town today and someone had been back there with a large 4-wheel drive vehicle and made a big mess and there needs to be some control so that sort of thing doesn't happen. Glenn said we all agree that there needs to be public input before we develop a new plan and the town forest committee will solicit members to aid in that effort. Glenn said he will come up with past policies as a preliminary draft. Mark asked if there is a timeframe. Glenn said he thinks its going to be time consuming which is why he thought the Selectboard and the forest committee should get together and get started. Tom asked if the state has plans in place for the land that borders the town forest. Bruce said yes. Tom asked if they have a map. Bruce said it would be nice to have an inventory of what's there today. Bruce said Jim Lyall has a map of all the mountain bike trails. Bruce said there are a lot of "double track" trails up there. Dennis Lemire said they mapped everything after the town was given the land, even the skidder trails. Tom asked if Weathersfield has an ATV trail on their side. No one knew. Bruce said Reading has an ATV trail network. Dennis Lemire said he agrees with #8 of Ted's email which suggests allowing firewood cutting for needy families. Mark said the forest committee was thinking they should have the wood cut and brought to a landing area and not have people in there cutting, for liability reasons. All agreed that the access is poor. There was discussion about various logging methods and equipment. Kenny said the town forest boundary is not marked very well. Glenn said marking the boundaries should be done prior to or in conjunction with the forest management plan. John asked when they should start trying to get public input. Glenn said he'd like to see it happen soon. Kenny said they'll try to start having regular meetings. Bruce said having regular meetings that are well publicized will help get people involved. Kenny said the committee's goals are timber, wildlife, and recreation, not necessarily in that order. There was discussion about the lack of physical evidence of the town forest boundary in many places. Bruce asked about the abutters on the Weathersfield side. Kenny said there are 10 to 15 abutters on that side. Dennis Lemire asked if the hang gliders are still sending \$100 per year and a Certificate of Insurance. Glenn said the town is named as "additional insured" on the hang gliding association's policy and we do have a Certificate of Insurance but we have not received anything from them in some time. Bruce said he is not sure we

want to. Glenn said if the town starts accepting money from the association, we might be held liable. Glenn said the association does not want to lose the use of the hang gliding platform and they are very responsive. Glenn said he talked to Ted Siegler about using some of the funds received from the sale of town forest property to the resort for the forest management plan update and he's on board with that. John expressed concern about dirt bike groups that have big rallies. Tom said that's why he thinks registration is a good idea. John said he thinks it would help to have a handful of local responsible people up there riding in designated areas and keeping an eye on things. Dennis mentioned the extensive ATV network in Fairlee.

- 3) Other Business – Brook Road: Tom said the trees have been cut for the Brook Road bank stabilization project but one of the telephone poles is rotted out on the inside so he asked CVPS to replace it. Tom said he got a final price from Dan Lesnick and now the price is over \$15,000, which normally goes to bid. Tom said he also talked to Jerry Ouelette about removing the railing and he got a really good price. Tom said Jerry installed the railings at the Veteran's Center in White River Junction, so he's qualified to do that and he's going to give Tom a price. Tom said he's going to review the numbers because the total is over \$15,000, which is more than the town has available. Glenn asked Tom if he has spoken with the woman who administers the Community Development Grant funds. Tom said he spoke with her boss who said they have approved similar projects in the past and they don't have a problem with it. Glenn asked Tom to keep the Selectboard posted.
- 4) Adjourn – **Tom made a motion to adjourn at 7:25 PM. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison