

WEST WINDSOR SELECTBOARD
WEST WINDSOR PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes
March 21, 2013

Present: Glenn Seward, Tom Kenyon, Bruce Boedtker, Al Keiller, Mark Isenberg, Barbara Truex, Elvin Kaplan, Steve Querrey (prospective buyer, talc plant), Robert Toppin (forestry consultant), Doug Symmes (real estate broker), Jim Lyall (member, Town Forest Committee & Sports Trails of the Ascutney Basin (STAB)), Erik Schutz (STAB President), Martha Harrison

- 1) Call to Order – Selectboard Chair Glenn Seward called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.
- 2) Public Comment – None
- 3) Talc Plant discussion – Glenn welcomed Steve, Robert and Doug and invited Steve and Robert to discuss their interest in the talc plant. Steve said they are looking at three possible locations for a pellet plant, including West Windsor. Glenn asked about the manufacturing process. Steve said their facility would use soft wood, which requires debarking. Steve said the pellet plant in Jaffrey produces 75,000 tons/year and this plant would produce approximately 20,000 tons/year. Al asked if the location choice is dependent on proximity to raw materials. Steve said yes and no; the closer the source, the cheaper the production costs. Barbara asked about retail sales. Steve said they're not anticipating retail sales on site. Al asked about the distribution range. Steve said he doesn't have that information yet. Steve noted that Vermont is not necessarily hospitable to industry but they are from Vermont and would like to locate here. Steve said Bob Flint from Springfield Regional Development Corp. has been great and the state has not been discouraging. Al asked if there is anything the town can help with in regard to infrastructure needs. Steve said not at this point. Bruce asked about the pros and cons of the West Windsor location. Steve said it's helpful that there is an existing building but it would cost a lot to renovate and floodproof. Steve added that the biomass plant proposed for Springfield would compete for materials. Robert said there are significant white pine resources in the CT river valley, but the roads to this site are not ideal. Barbara asked when a location decision will be made. Steve said soon. Robert said the plant could be up and running in six months. Barbara asked about the workforce. Steve said they are hoping to employ 28 people by the end of the fifth year. Steve asked about the town's economic development incentives (e.g. tax stabilization). Glenn said tax stabilization has to be approved by a 2/3 vote of the town, but the Selectboard is very receptive to any and all discussions. Tom noted that the town can only stabilize municipal taxes, not state education taxes. Mark noted that the prior pellet plant application was approved. Tom noted that Bridge #4 and Bridge #7 on Route 44 are scheduled for re-decking this summer and the Fire Department is nearby. Mark noted that West Windsor is also in the process of forming an Economic Development Task Force. Steve noted that the state offers training incentives. Elvin asked about hours of operations. Steve said that will be based on a cost-benefit analysis. Robert expressed concern about the restrictions on truck traffic during school bus hours associated with the previously approved pellet plant application. Glenn said, since the previous permit has expired, a new application would have to be reviewed so those issues would be open for discussion. Bruce said local support is helpful at the state level, and asked about the other two sites that are being considered. Steve did not want to share that information.
- 4) Discuss the formation of an Economic Development Task Force – Glenn said a task force with volunteers focused on accomplishing specific action items might be more palatable at this point than a paid Economic Coordinator and would enable the Selectboard to direct resources directly toward promotional materials and activities rather than payroll. Glenn asked the Planning Commission (PC) members their thoughts on this concept. Barbara said she likes the idea but thinks the Selectboard and PC need to be involved. Mark said he thinks a task force is the next best alternative to an Economic Coordinator. Glenn said on Monday night, the Selectboard earmarked \$5,600 for the concept of trail

system promotion, but we only have until the end of April to get something out there. Tom said business retention is important. Al noted that we've narrowed our economic development focus to promoting recreational opportunities and we need to stay focused on something we can achieve (e.g. the trail system and the Bike Festival). Glenn agreed that promoting the trail system is the way to go. Jim Lyall said the Bike Festival is a joint effort between STAB and the Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA). Jim said Ryan Thibault has made a logo and a poster for the Festival, as well as a blog, a facebook page and a web page, paid for by VMBA with the Vermont 50 as a sponsor. Jim said the Festival is an opportunity for West Windsor to show mountain bikers our trails. Erik said the Festival will generate a "buzz" about our trails, as well as repeat visitors. Bruce said we should promote the town, along with the trails and the festival. Mark agreed and said Burke's website is very location centered. Glenn said the \$5,600 is for the design of promotional materials for the trail system, not the Festival. Erik agreed. Glenn said there will be additional costs for getting the information out there. Barbara asked if the trail system will be marketed as "Ascutney Trails." Erik said yes. Barbara asked what help STAB would need from the Task Force. Erik said the trail infrastructure needs to be maintained and have adequate signage. Bruce agreed that we have to make sure the "product" is in good shape. Erik said sponsors are also needed for the trail system. Jim said he would like to expand the trails that are on the ski slopes before the festival. Bruce asked Jim if he needs additional labor. Jim said he has some potential volunteers but could use some assistance from the town in attracting additional local volunteers. Tom asked about the connector trail to the state park. Jim said it was approved but there are restrictions and the state wants to do the loop across from the state park before they do the connector trail. Erik said work should start on the connector trail next summer (2014). Barbara asked if Snowdance has approved the trails on the ski slopes. Jim said it was part of the Act 250 permit. Glenn added that the town has a trail agreement with Snowdance. Barbara asked how secure the agreement is. Glenn said it's not as secure as it should be. Glenn noted that, so far, prospective buyers of the Resort have been enthusiastic about the trail system. Jim noted that the best beginner trails are on Mile Long Field so if we lose that, it would be really tough. Regarding the Task Force, Glenn said we're hoping to establish a group of people, including someone from STAB, to help with marketing the trail system. Glenn asked the PC if they are okay with the town committing funds for this initial marketing effort. The PC agreed. Those present agreed that the Task Force should have five members. Glenn suggested getting the Task Force together prior to the meeting with the Marketing Consultant. Barbara asked if other local recreational attractions should be included. Those present agreed that they should be included. Jim said for the festival they have included lodging information but it would be great if the town could put something together about the other recreational opportunities available. Erik noted that most bikers are only on the trails for a couple of hours. Bruce asked if the Task Force can be assembled and get started in time to make an impact for this year's "green season." Glenn said he would like to get the Marketing Consultant here as soon as possible and, at the same time, start organizing the Task Force. Glenn said, in his view, the marketing effort should start yesterday. Jim said Ryan is finalizing a book on Mountain Biking in Vermont, which includes West Windsor's trail system. Barbara said the Task Force should have a focused charge – to put together a marketing effort for the trail system for the green season, for example. Tom said it will be interesting to see how much "bang for the buck" we get. Martha asked how much information is already known and assembled – names and addresses of New England bike shops, for example. Jim said he has email addresses for about 200 bike shops. Martha said one thing the Task Force could do while Ryan is developing an ad for us is to figure out where it should be placed, how much it's going to cost, how often we can afford to run it, what the deadline is, etc. Jim said Ryan would make recommendations. Erik said we would need to build a comprehensive website and there's a cost associated with that. Erik reiterated the need for sponsors to help with costs. Erik said Ryan wrote an article mentioning West Windsor's trail system that is going to appear in *Dirt Rag* magazine. Jim said there isn't funding currently for placing ads and sending posters to bike shops but, once there is a coordinated message, STAB can do some of the social media work, which takes time rather than money. Glenn asked Jim and Erik if they're okay with having the Task Force involved.

Jim and Erik both said yes. Barbara asked what “Ascutney Trails” would include. Jim handed out an initial graphic image showing the entire mountain including the hiking and mountain bike trails. Barbara asked if Green Mountain Horse Association (GMHA) has any trails on the mountain. Jim said no. Erik noted that Weathersfield has a new town forest on the other side of Mt. Ascutney. Jim said the more trails you have, the more people you attract. Elvin asked about the next step. Glenn asked if someone on the PC is willing to get the Task Force organized. Mark volunteered. Glenn said the Selectboard is willing to help. Martha offered to help as well. Al suggested writing a simple charter. Glenn said his take is that the Task Force is going to promote the trail system. Glenn asked if there is something the Task Force can do between now and April 9th to prepare for the meeting with Ryan Thibault. Jim volunteered to represent STAB on the Task Force. Tom asked about the term length for Task Force members. Glenn said the term could be through 2013. Elvin said it’s important to measure the results. Martha asked if we can get a trail counter. Erik said they have a trail counter in Rutland. Barbara asked if there is a fee for the festival. Erik said yes; STAB, as host, is hoping to raise \$6,000 from the festival. Mark asked for a reference for Ryan. Erik said Ryan posts a lot of his work on www.mtbvt.com Mark also requested a copy of Ryan’s proposal. Erik said he would email the proposal to Mark. With no further trail promotion issues to discuss, Erik, Jim and the PC departed.

- 5) Other Business – Short-term Disability: The Selectboard talked about when short-term disability should start and end, how much of the employee’s salary should be covered, and the need for a doctor’s orders. The Selectboard agreed that the town should cover 2/3 of an employee’s salary after four weeks, for up to four months, after the employee has used up all his or her sick time. Health Savings Account (HSA) contribution: Glenn asked Tom and Bruce if they are comfortable contributing the other half of Phil’s HSA money prior to July 1st. Tom and Bruce agreed to make the contribution the day before it is needed, after receiving a note from his doctor. Sewer billing: Glenn said it has been suggested that the town do the sewer billing and collecting, rather than having an escrow agent. Glenn said Snowdance would forego any management fees and would only submit bills for hard costs. Glenn said it would be good to have this agreement in place by the end of the month so quarterly bills could go out. Glenn said Snowdance thinks the court will allow the sale to proceed within a few weeks of the purchase and sales agreement being signed, with the funds to go into an escrow account. Glenn said he would like the Town Attorney’s blessing before proceeding. Bruce agreed. Martha asked what would happen if there were a large unexpected expense. Glenn said it would come out of the WASTE escrow account. Bruce asked if the town could have our engineers give a second opinion on the necessity for any unexpected major repairs. Glenn said yes. Tom asked about insurance on the system. Glenn said it will be insured through Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), based on the number of hookups and the replacement cost of the pump stations. The Selectboard agreed to proceed as proposed, assuming that the Town Attorney agrees. Temporary employee: Tom said the Highway Foreman should state for the record, at the next meeting, who he is hiring as a temporary employee and for what rate of pay. Bruce and Glenn agreed. AOT meeting: The Selectboard agreed that an 8:30 AM meeting on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday would be preferable, except for April 5th.
- 6) Adjourn – **Glenn moved to adjourn at 12:20 PM. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison