

WEST WINDSOR SELECTBOARD

Draft Minutes

April 10, 2013

Present: Glenn Seward, Bruce Boedtke, Barbara Rhoad (Ascutney Trails Association (ATA)), Barbara Truex (Planning Commission (PC)), Ryan Thibault (Marketing Consultant), Jim Lyall (Sports Trails of Ascutney Basin (STAB)), Mark Isenberg (PC), Amy Yates (Owner, Brownsville General Store), Erik Schutz (STAB), Colin McKaig (STAB), Chris Reister (STAB), Steve Giroux (ATA), Martha Harrison

- 1) Call to Order – Selectboard Chair Glenn Seward called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.
- 2) “Ascutney Trails” marketing proposal by Ryan Thibault of Mountain Bike Vermont – After introductions, Ryan described his education and experience and said he thinks Vermont is poised to be a mountain bike mecca for the northeast. Ryan provided those present with a marketing and branding proposal for “Ascutney Trails” that includes demographic and economic statistics. Ryan recommended reaching out to Quebec with marketing efforts. Ryan noted West Windsor’s strengths as a mountain biking destination: proximity to Boston and New York, existing mapped trails and accommodations, a tourist friendly environment, a local bike shop in Windsor, an energized local population, and other recreational activities. Ryan said he can help create a brand identity with a logo, a website, and a social media campaign. Ryan said what we should be selling is a comprehensive experience, not just mountain biking; accommodations, restaurants, and other recreational activities should be included and associated with the brand. According to Ryan, people don’t want to be sold something; they want to be told about it by a friend, which is why a social media campaign is so important. Martha asked how a social media campaign is done. Ryan said he would come up with a schedule that would include posting trail news, conditions, and instagram photos. Ryan also mentioned “guerilla advertising” with stickers. There was discussion about multi-use trails and encouraging trail runners to use mountain bike trails. Ryan noted the powerful impact that events can have on trail network promotion. There was discussion about the Vermont 50 race with Ryan encouraging a strengthening of the link between the event and the trail system. Ryan also said that road biking should be included in the mix to keep people in the area for a couple extra days. There are also events involving running or biking up the mountain. Ryan talked about indirect promotion through a short video featuring a local professional or semi-professional rider posted on pinkbike.com, vitalmtb.com and mtbvt.com with the potential to generate 50,000 views in a week. Ryan and Steve Giroux talked about collaborating on a video production. Ryan also suggested a cooperative venture between the General Store and/or a local bike shop that could sell trail maps, T-shirts and decals. Ryan talked about a website for the “Ascutney Trails” brand that would direct people to hiking, biking, camping and other amenities in the area. Ryan said the website could also generate advertising revenue to support itself. Ryan cautioned that it’s hard to drive traffic to a website without social media support. Ryan suggested that the group look at the “Parc de la Gorge” website. Regarding timing, Ryan said if we start now, we could have a full marketing campaign in place for 2014. Mark asked about first steps. Ryan suggested a small committee with a representative from STAB, ATA, and the Selectboard to help him create the brand. Then the committee would come up with a schedule for collecting data for the website. Ryan said a lot could be implemented in ninety days. Mark said the town would like to capitalize on this year’s “green season.” Ryan also talked about convincing local businesses (e.g. Harpoon) to support the promotion of the brand. Ryan said encouraging mountain biking among children is also important so it’s essential to have beginner terrain. Bruce said he thinks West Windsor is deficient in beginner trails. Bruce agreed that the promotion efforts should be inclusive and noted the town’s beautiful back roads. Ryan said the kiosk could have the mountain bike trails on one side and a dirt road loop on the other side. Glenn asked if there is a downside to a phased approach. Ryan said no. Ryan said if the group decides to proceed he would develop a marketing plan and a timeline for a slow roll-out, with a full brand launch in the spring of 2014. Ryan said he would lobby to have the festival in West Windsor next year as well.

Glenn asked if we should get the brand in place ASAP. Ryan said the only thing that should come before that is a clear idea of what is being branded. There was discussion about the pros and cons of “Ascutney Trails” as a brand. Ryan noted that there is a lot of work involved in a successful marketing campaign. Ryan said it would be great to do some analytics to document the success of the campaign. Bruce said we can’t charge people to use the trails so we need to come up with a way to generate income to maintain the network. Ryan said there are options such as charging for parking or maps. Bruce said the town is not allowed to collect revenues, even for parking or maps. Ryan said he will look into the options for generating revenue. Beyond the marketing, Bruce said, we need to make sure the trails are well-maintained. Barbara Rhoad said coordinating with Windsor is also important since Windsor has a bike shop and Harpoon. Ryan agreed that the region needs to be defined. Glenn asked where we go from here. Ryan said the group should decide who will be communicating with him directly and he will come up with a more defined budget and timeline geared to a soft launch this summer with a full launch in 2014. Ryan agreed to come up with the budget and timeline in a week or so. Jim said, in the meantime, he needs to print new maps and he’d like to put “Ascutney Trails” on them. Ryan said the Stowe map generated \$10,000 and cost \$1,500 to produce. There was discussion about possible sponsors and advertisers.

3) Adjourn – **The meeting adjourned by consensus at 8:23 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison