

WEST WINDSOR SELECTBOARD

Draft Minutes

December 20, 2012

Present: Glenn Seward, Tom Kenyon, Bruce Boedtke, Cathy Boedtke, SWCRPC Director Tom Kennedy, Aldrich & Elliott Engineer Joe Duncan, Wastewater Committee Chair Al Keiller, VT Community Development Specialist Lisa Ryan, VT Community Development Specialist Nathan Cleveland, VT Community Development Program Director Josh Hanford, Martha Harrison

- 1) Call to Order – Selectboard Chair Glenn Seward called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.
- 2) Meet with Vermont Community Development Specialist Nathan Cleveland, Regional Planning Commission Director Tom Kennedy, and Aldrich & Elliott Engineer Joe Duncan to discuss funding opportunities for expansion of the sewer line into the village of Brownsville – Tom Kennedy said the majority of people in the service area have to be in the low to moderate income category. There was discussion about how income is determined. Tom Kennedy said it is self-reported. Tom Kennedy said there may also be funding through a USDA rural development grant. Joe said USDA funding will depend on median household income. Tom Kennedy said if you're requesting public facilities funding, you have to serve people with low to moderate incomes, and if you're requesting economic development funding, you have to create jobs. Glenn asked if we could argue that we're doing both. Tom Kennedy said they would want to know how many jobs are being created due to this project. Tom Kennedy said the town will have to do an income survey for any funding source. Nate said the income threshold for a family of four is about \$54,000. Josh said West Windsor would need to create jobs or provide housing or services (e.g. daycare, food shelf) to families with low to moderate incomes. Glenn said without a sewer line, there can be no changes of use in town, including affordable accessory dwellings or new businesses. Josh said there is a prohibition against supporting public schools with VCDP funding. Josh said VCDP can support programs that are housed in public school buildings as long as they're not run by the school. Cathy noted that the local school does not have a hot lunch program because they don't have septic capacity. Joe Duncan provided an overview of the needs assessment and the sewer line expansion project. Joe asked if it is advantageous from a funding perspective to combine the acquisition of the existing sewer line with the expansion into the village. Josh said he thinks it could be advantageous. Josh gave an overview of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which the town has used before. Josh said handicapped accessibility projects always qualify. Josh said CDBG funding is not enough to do sewer and water projects so it is just used to fill gaps in the funding. Josh said the community has to demonstrate an understanding of what they can afford to take on in terms of bonding and debt, and what they can expect to receive from rate payers. Josh said the more money the town has to borrow, the higher the user rates and the less affordable it is for people with low to moderate incomes. Josh agreed that the town should provide for future growth. There was discussion about the lack of a school lunch program. Josh said it would be helpful to know how many kids would be eligible for a free or reduced lunch. If a licensed kitchen and lunch program were added, Lisa asked, could the kitchen also do community meals and operate as a warming shelter or a soup kitchen. Lisa said facilities that serve seniors (e.g. meals on wheels) are considered eligible. Bruce asked if there has to be a firm commitment to establish such a facility. Josh said yes. Josh suggested an income survey of

the residents in the proposed service area because if the town meets the income threshold they don't have to meet any other eligibility criteria. Josh asked if the town has an amount in mind that will make the project feasible. Tom Kenyon described the existing and former uses of the buildings in the village and noted that septic capacity is the limiting factor. Josh agreed that the town needs to do something to avoid the slow strangulation of economic activity. Al said it sounds like the town needs to model the cost to rate payers and the potential for bonding. Al asked how much of the total project cost could potentially be funded with a CDBG. Josh said it depends on how many users satisfy the income criteria; the highest amount that could be awarded is \$1 million but that would be very hard to get because there is a lot of competition for the \$6 million in available funds. Al asked if \$200,000 would be realistic. Josh said yes; the town should ask for enough to make it worthwhile to comply with all the federal requirements. Josh said the town would also have to meet federal requirements if they pursue USDA rural development funds. Joe said it's possible that the town could get a pollution abatement grant also. Josh noted the state's smart growth priorities, which are meant to encourage growth in historic downtowns. Glenn said it would not be tolerable to spread the \$2.1 million cost over the user base; it would have to be spread over the whole town. Joe noted that the cost of purchasing the resort system will be carried by the users of the system. Tom Kennedy noted that the Albert Bridge School serves all the special needs students in the supervisory union. Al asked about the timeframe. Josh said VCDP accepts applications on a rolling basis and prefers projects that are ready to go. Josh said a Community Development Specialist will work with the town to make sure the project is eligible and the application is as competitive as possible. Josh said there are three or four board meetings per year. Tom Kennedy said it would probably take four months to prepare an application and two years before the town received a check. There was discussion about the timing of obtaining voter approval. Josh said towns usually request approval for the entire cost of the project and inform the voters of their efforts to reduce costs through grant funding. Josh said the income survey can consist of simply asking renters and owners in the service area if their household income is above or below the threshold amount. Josh also suggested asking businesses in the service area if the lack of a public sewer system is preventing them from expanding. Josh encouraged the town to find out how many students are eligible for free or reduced lunch and to consider possible partnerships with non-profit food or shelter programs. Josh said he has never encountered this situation before, where a school cannot provide a lunch program due to insufficient sewer capacity. Josh said, although the VCDP cannot directly put money into the school, he will check to see if benefiting low to moderate income students will help the town's eligibility. Lisa asked about businesses in the service area. Joe noted the General Store and Martha noted the Brownsville Garage. Josh said if the town could show that five new jobs would be added in the service area as a result of the sewer expansion, that could make a difference. However, Josh said, if those jobs don't materialize, the money has to be paid back. Martha asked if school cafeteria jobs would count. Josh said VCDP will look into that. Martha noted that the library doesn't have a bathroom. Josh said the town could do ADA work in the library. Josh suggested that the town contact their local representatives and make them aware of the situation. Lisa asked how many jobs disappeared when the resort closed. Glenn said about 200. Lisa suggested that the town note the loss of jobs and the potential for replacing some of them with a sewer expansion. Bruce said the re-opening of the ski area is what would motivate someone to open a business in Brownsville because, otherwise, there isn't enough traffic. Josh asked if anyone

is talking about other uses for the ski area. Glenn noted the trail system. Tom Kenyon said the jobs that were lost were, in general, lower income jobs. Glenn said potential buyers of the ski area want the sewer situation to be straightened out. There was discussion about the sewer rates relative to average sewer rates and the benefits of municipal ownership. Josh asked about the town's revolving loan fund. Tom Kenyon said it was closed out. Lisa asked where the employees who worked at the resort lived. Glenn said the resort drew employees from up to 20 miles away. Josh said a CDBG loan could be used to help someone re-open the resort. Tom Kenyon noted the town's interest in maintaining the historic character of the village. Lisa asked if people have changed their minds about opening a business in town due to the lack of septic capacity. Martha said there was someone interested in opening a hair salon in the village but, because of the water and sewer issues, she didn't think she could do it. Glenn said there was also an engineering firm that had expressed interest in locating in West Windsor but they went to Windsor instead. Lisa suggested documenting this information. Cathy suggested expanding the kitchen at the church and using it as an emergency shelter. Josh noted that expanding the kitchen would be an additional expense. Josh suggested starting with an income survey or checking the census tracts. Josh said if 20% of the service area meets the income requirements, the town can apply for funding for that specific section of the service area. Josh said the program requires a vote and a public hearing. Lisa said VCDP can send the town an income survey template. Joe said Aldrich & Elliott (A&E) can check the census tracts. Tom Kenyon asked about vacant buildings. Josh said if census information is being used, it is based on the occupancy of the building at the time of the census and, if an income survey is being conducted, it is based on whoever lives there at the time of the survey. Josh said the town can select its service area based on income. Joe said A&E plans to wrap up their preliminary engineering study by February so the information can be presented at Town Meeting, and the next step would be a bond vote. Joe asked if the application should be submitted before or after the bond vote has passed. Josh said there is no right answer and suggested pursuing them at the same time. Lisa said the application would be due in April for the June board meeting. Joe said for a USDA rural development grant, the application will not be considered until a bond vote passes. Josh said VCDP will accept an application but won't enter into a grant agreement with the town until a bond vote passes. Given the proximity of the existing sewer line, Josh said, West Windsor is in better shape than it would be if it were an isolated town.

- 3) Adjourn – **Glenn moved to adjourn at 10:50 AM. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison