

WEST WINDSOR SELECTBOARD

Draft Minutes

May 3, 2011

Present: Glenn Seward, Bruce Boedtke, Tom Kenyon, Phil Arvidson, Betty and Dennis Lemire, Wayne Lemire, Genevieve Lemire, Stewart & Sara McCracken, Heather Hoyns, John McNamara, Edson Pierce, Dennis Brown, Cathy Boedtke, Shelley Seward, Bob French, Nancy Gaynor, Jerry & Shirley Ouelette, Barbara Gerstner, Elvin Kaplan, Lee Monroe, Win & Rita Johnson, Ann Matthews, Chris & Nancy Nesbitt, Dana & Paula Waters, Dick Beatty & Laura Page, Shannon Harrington, Chris Callahan, Scott Hammond, Molly Hammond, Shirley Hammond, Jay Van Brunt, Ralph & Linda Stone, Jim Lyall, Amy Yates, Earl Knight, Merle & Leone Bushkin, Kenny Burke, Courtney McKaig, Karen Corkum, Ray & Lynda Shannis, Nancy Duffy, Mark Isenberg, Martha Harrison

- 1) Call to Order – Selectboard Chair Glenn Seward called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.
- 2) Public Information Session on the proposed purchase of Mile Long Field (MLF) – Glenn provided some background information on the proposed purchase of MLF, which is priced at \$7,800 per acre for a total of \$379,000. Glenn also reviewed the current zoning restrictions on MLF, which are subject to change and, therefore, cannot be relied on to protect the field. The purchase, if approved by the voters, would be funded with \$150,000 from the town, \$100,000 from a grant through Upper Valley Land Trust, and the balance from private donations. Glenn reported that the Friends of MLF currently have \$87,000 in pledges. The on-going cost to each tax payer of removing MLF from the Grand List would be approximately 75 cents per year for a home valued at \$250,000. The cost of purchasing the field would be approximately \$40 per year for 3 years for a tax payer with a home valued at \$250,000. Glenn said MLF could play a part in a plan now underway to stimulate economic activity in the area through the expansion and marketing of the recreational trail system. In response to a question about restrictions on the use of the property, Glenn said MLF would be merged with the Town Forest and subject to the same restrictions as the Town Forest; the field would also have a conservation easement on it in perpetuity. Heather Hoyns asked about restrictions on the use of the field. Glenn said that hasn't been determined yet, but there would be no structures on the field. Glenn said discussions on the use of the town forest have indicated that residents are in favor of hiking, biking, horseback riding, and other low-impact activities. Glenn said the grant is not a sure thing; the application will be submitted in July. Dennis Lemire asked what could be built in MLF. Glenn said under current zoning, no structures can be built in MLF but that could change by the owner appealing the zoning. Tom noted that the field could be subdivided and combined with acreage to the west. In response to a question, Glenn said that subdivided sections of the field could be fenced. Glenn said he thinks there are approximately 140 acres to the west of MLF, which the owners would probably sell if they had an offer. Ray Shannis said that it is his understanding that the current owner of the Resort believes that, by selling MLF, he can then sell the Ski Area at a lower price. Glenn said the current owners plan to recoup as much money as they can, and feel that that can be done by dividing the Resort into sections: the Ski Area, the sewer line, and the acreage that includes MLF. Shirley Ouelette asked what would happen if the grant doesn't come through. Glenn said if the other two sources of funding don't come through, the deal is off. Stewart McCracken asked how this issue came about. Glenn said the town approached the Resort because MLF is mentioned many times in the Town

Plan. When asked about the negotiation process, Glenn said this is a “take it or leave it” deal. Glenn said the subdivision process has started but will stop if the deal doesn’t come together. Asked again about uses, Glenn said his view is that there is enough space in MLF and the Town Forest to accommodate all sorts of activities. Amy Yates said she thinks the allowed uses should be established before the town votes on whether or not to acquire MLF. Glenn said he thinks the forest ecologist’s assessment will make it clear what uses are suitable for MLF and the Town Forest. Jim Lyall said the Town Forest Committee (TFC) is using survey results to determine what uses should be allowed. Jim said the TFC has talked about limiting recreational use to the lower portion of the forest. Jim said he sees MLF as a prime place for recreation. Asked about the timeline, Glenn said the town has a signed Letter of Intent that is good until the first week in September. Glenn added that the vote on May 10th is a big part of this. Ray Shannis asked how residents can help the Selectboard spread the word. Glenn said word of mouth works as well as anything. Scott asked if funds will be set aside to maintain MLF. Glenn said the Selectboard hopes to get local farmers to continue to hay the field as has been done for many decades. Glenn said other potential maintenance costs have not been addressed yet. When asked about liability issues, Glenn said the town is covered under Vermont’s limited liability law. When asked about access, Glenn said there are two access points and a parking area on Mountainside Drive and one access on Route 44. Glenn added that there is parking at the existing town forest access off Coaching Lane, which the town plans to improve. Glenn said there is room for approximately 35 cars in the Mountainside Drive parking area and 10 in the existing town forest parking lot. Glenn said if usage increases, we can plan for more parking. Elvin Kaplan asked if having a jar for voluntary contributions would affect the town’s liability. Glenn said he has been told that it would not. Asked about the number of building lots west of MLF, Glenn said he thinks there would be three 40-acre lots, which could be served by a ROW off Lemire Road or Coaching Lane. When asked if the use of MLF would be restricted to residents of West Windsor, Glenn said the Selectboard is considering a plan to open the town forest for wider use by people outside the community. Glenn noted that since we have a dormant Ski Area and no other economic activity in town, the Selectboard feels that they should be looking for another activity to augment the Resort when it re-opens. Glenn said the Selectboard is considering the mountain bike concept as implemented in Burke and the Waterbury-Stowe area. Glenn said those communities have been transformed by the additional economic activity generated by mountain bikers. Glenn said the Selectboard would like to improve the town’s economic outlook. Tom said a preliminary evaluation indicates that we’re not going to get rich harvesting lumber from the town forest. A comment was made that, if we’re not going to charge people to use public land for recreation, the goal must be to increase activity at the General Store and area businesses. Glenn said yes, and visitors may consider this a great place to live and want to build a house here or buy one of the many houses for sale. Bruce said the Town of Burke has studied how the Kingdom Trails have benefited the town and the average visitor spends \$100 per day, stays for two nights, and comes back at least two times. Bruce said the economic benefit to the town is about \$4 million per year from mountain biking and cross country skiing. Bruce noted that they do charge for trail use. Scott Hammond asked who is going to maintain the bike trails. Glenn said the Selectboard is considering a collaborative effort between the town and STAB (Sports Trails of the Ascutney Basin)

and there are a lot of details to be worked out. Ray Shannis commented on the number of people who come to Brownsville because of the Vermont 50 race. A question was asked about the deed conveying the town forest to the Town of West Windsor and whether there are any use restrictions in that deed. Tom said he is not aware of any restrictions on the property. Ralph Stone asked who hays MLF. Glenn said Bill Yates hays it and he believes that he keeps the hay as payment for mowing. Ralph asked if the town would consider letting local farmers have first choice in haying that field. Glenn said yes, the Selectboard would consider that. Amy asked if the idea of getting more mountain bikers to come to town is attached to the purchase of MLF or not. Glenn said the two are not attached although the purchase of MLF would certainly enhance the whole concept. Ray asked if it would complicate the Vermont 50 if there were “no trespassing” signs on the field. Jim Lyall said without MLF, it would be a lot more difficult to make the system work. Scott asked how often the town would hay the field. Glenn said at least once a year, but he doesn’t have the details. Scott said if the town had to pay, it would cost at least \$4,000 to hay that field. Asked about snowmobiling in the town forest, Glenn said the Selectboard put temporary restrictions on the use of the town forest last year but snowmobiles are allowed on the existing trail from the gravel pit to Kimball Farm Road. Glenn said Tom has been talking with Dennis Lemire about establishing a snowmobile trail from the Resort, past Coaching Lane, across Route 44, and onto the old Bowers Road. Glenn said he thinks an expanded snowmobile trail in the town forest is unlikely because the terrain is not suitable. Dennis Lemire said there is not a great need for a snowmobile system on the mountain. Glenn said the vote on the proposed purchase of MLF is next Tuesday at 7:30 PM, and it will be a paper ballot. Kenny Burke asked about the possibility of having an Australian ballot. Glenn said the town has always taken care of business from the floor, so an Australian ballot is not an option. Glenn said he would have liked to have an Australian ballot. Glenn said we could petition the Secretary of State to allow it but then we would have to conduct all future town meetings in the same manner, and he doesn’t think the voters are interested in doing that. Glenn said the Selectboard does everything they can, including the town’s new website, to keep people informed. Tom encouraged people to use snail mail as well to contact the Selectboard. Tom said they always read all their letters.

- 3) Other business - None
- 4) Adjourn – **Tom made a motion to adjourn at 7:50 PM. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison