

## WEST WINDSOR SELECTBOARD

Draft Minutes

March 21, 2011

Present: Glenn Seward, Tom Kenyon, Bruce Boedtke, Cathy Archibald, Martha Harrison, Dennis Brown, Mark Isenberg

- 1) Call to Order – Selectboard Chair Glenn Seward called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.
- 2) Changes – Library update
- 3) Mile Long Field discussion – Glenn summarized the progress to date and reported that the owner will not sell the southern two-thirds of the field without the northern third. Glenn noted that there has been some friction between the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) and the owner. There was discussion about the possible future construction of a snowmaking pond with a 20' embankment and the impact of that on the value of the northern third of the field. Tom expressed concern about the town having limited control over the property if UVLT is involved. Glenn said UVLT has some issues with the appraisal but the owner is unwilling to reduce his per-acre asking price whether the appraisal is revised or not. Regarding the potential access point and parking area for the field, Tom said he thinks a location further south on Mountainside Drive would be preferable because it would be closer to the Town Forest. Glenn said that's possible although the topography is more challenging. Tom noted that Mile Long Field would be the only open land owned by the town as there is no open land in the town forest. Bruce suggested that the north end of MLF could be useful to the current owner as density land. There was discussion about the additional studies that would need to be done before the snowmaking pond could be built, which would include a soil analysis and a breach analysis. Bruce said he agrees that the Resort will need a pond eventually but said that it could be re-engineered to have less of an impact. Tom said he thinks the pond is larger than necessary. Bruce agreed. There was discussion about the state's restrictions on taking water out of Mill Brook. Glenn said UVLT estimates that it would cost between \$500 and \$1,000 to have the appraiser address their concerns. Glenn said the owner's representative has no objection to the Town and UVLT revisiting the appraisal but any revisions to the appraisal will not affect the asking price. Glenn said the only reason to revisit the appraisal is to make sure it meets the requirements of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB). Glenn said he has been assured that VHCB will consider grant applications in situations where the asking price is higher than the appraised value. Glenn said the deficiencies in our situation are that we don't have voter approval to fund a portion of the purchase with tax revenues, we don't have a purchase and sales or option agreement, the subdivision has not been approved yet, and there is no formal survey of the property. Glenn said he would like to gauge the town's level of support for the purchase at the informational meeting tomorrow night. Glenn said he would also like to schedule a special town meeting sooner rather than later. Glenn offered the following as a draft article for the warning: "Shall the town authorize the Selectmen to borrow \$150,000 for the purchase of Mile Long Field. The balance of the purchase price shall be obtained through private grants and donations." Glenn said if the article passes, we can get a formal survey, continue the subdivision process and enter into a purchase and sales agreement, which will make for a stronger grant application. Tom asked about easements associated with the pond that the Resort will need from the town.

Glenn said the Resort will need easements for piping and access. There was brief discussion about spoil piles for excavated soil. The Selectboard agreed that they need to get a sense of the level of support from the town tomorrow night. Glenn said Martha did a timeline for the subdivision process and it's his opinion that we should start that process. Glenn also suggested May 13<sup>th</sup> as a possible date for a special Town Meeting. Mark Isenberg asked if people will be able to vote on the MLF purchase by proxy or if they will have to be present. Glenn said people have to be present to vote because that's how West Windsor voters have elected to conduct town business. Glenn said the town checked with the Secretary of State's office about using Australian ballot and we were told that we could not. Mark said he heard that the Selectboard would be asking the voters to approve \$75,000 and he also heard that it would be 8 cents per tax payer. Glenn said taking Mile Long Field off the Grand List would cost 80 cents per year for a property owner with a \$200,000 property. Glenn said that does not include the purchase price. Glenn added that the Selectboard would like to structure the purchase in such a way that it does not have much effect on the tax rate. Mark said he is concerned about the costs associated with a regional police force and a town sewer and the reductions in tax revenue that would result from a decrease in the appraised value of properties adjacent to a ski resort that is no longer viable. Mark said falling revenues and increased costs could have a deleterious effect on the community. Mark said he thinks ensuring the viability of the Resort is in the best interest of the community. Mark said he doesn't think the town's purchase of Mile Long Field is in the best interest of the resort or the community. Mark asked if the \$150,000 that the voters may be asked to approve would include all improvements, surveys, appraisals, etc. Glenn said no; \$150,000 is just an amount suggested for the town's contribution. Bruce said the town's contribution wouldn't change; any additional funds needed would have to come from grants and donations. Mark asked about the status of the resort. Glenn said he has been told that there are 3 prospective purchasers. Tom said he would estimate the cost of a regional police force to be a penny or a penny and a half on the tax rate. Tom said one threat to our community is that young people can't afford a place to live here. Mark said he agrees and he thinks some of the things the town is considering would further inhibit affordability – no jobs, no development. Tom agreed with Mark that the Resort is an important source of jobs for the community. Bruce said the Selectboard would not do anything that would jeopardize the viability or sale of the resort. Bruce explained that the current owner is selling some of the resort's assets to reduce the asking price for the ski area and increase the likelihood of finding a buyer. Mark said selling off too many assets will make it so the ski area can't succeed. Glenn said the Selectboard would not be considering this if they thought it would have a negative impact on the resort and, in fact, it may have a positive impact. Mark talked about the negative effect on property values of the resort being closed. Tom said this may be the town's only opportunity to buy Mile Long Field and it would be irresponsible for the Selectboard not to consider it. Mark noted the abundance of existing recreational resources in town. Dennis Brown asked about the impact of the purchase of Mile Long Field on tax payers. Glenn said taking Mile Long Field off the Grand List would increase the taxes on a \$200,000 property by a total of 80 cents per year. Dennis asked if the field behind Steve Plaustainer's house would be isolated. Glenn said no. Dennis asked about the access. Glenn said there is access through the pastures behind Kaplan's. Dennis said he is against the purchase of Mile Long Field because he has no use for it. Glenn said it's not the Selectboard's decision; it's the voter's decision. Glenn

said he agrees with Tom that it would be irresponsible not to consider this opportunity. Mark asked if the town has considered buying the entire resort. Glenn said there have been conversations about that. Tom said he is concerned about the cost to the taxpayers of running the resort. Glenn said there have been similar situations at Mad River Glen, Magic Mountain and Hogback. Tom said separating out the Resort's water and wastewater systems could also benefit a potential buyer of the ski area. Tom said the Selectboard has been active in trying to make things happen that would facilitate the sale of the resort. Glenn said the fire district concept is one possibility but we may also see an outside entity own and operate the utility. Glenn suggested checking with Cathy Archibald to see if there is enough money available to borrow from ourselves. Tom and Bruce agreed that Glenn should find out about available funds. Bruce asked what information the Selectboard is going to have available at the meeting tomorrow night. Glenn showed Tom and Bruce a map and some financial information that he would like to present if they agree. Bruce agreed. Tom asked about the effect on the 2012 tax rate. Tom asked Cathy what happens to the tax rate if the library roof and the town forest project, which are going to be paid for with surplus funds, are subtracted from the amount to be raised by taxes. Cathy said she will have to figure that out.

- 4) Consider Letter of Intent – The Selectboard did not consider this agenda item.
- 5) Other Business – Town Clerk's orders: Cathy had orders for the Selectboard to sign, which they did. Zoning office work: Tom asked if the bill from Dennis Lemire was higher than the estimate. Glenn said yes because the estimate did not include soundproofing for the east wall. Library update: Tom said the time had expired on the roofer's original estimate; the new estimate is \$36,800. Tom said the roofer will start in mid-April. Tom asked the Selectboard to authorize the funds to be released with an initial payment of \$16,000. **Glenn made a motion to authorize the initial payment of \$16,000 for the library roof. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed with Tom abstaining.** Cathy asked if the checks should be written from the library's account or the town's account. Tom said the town voted to take it out of surplus funds so it should come from the town, not the library. Glenn and Bruce agreed. Cathy said she will set up an account under "Other voted articles – library roof." Stream alteration permits: Bruce noted that we have a verbal okay for the projects from the state but we need to do the paperwork. Tree in brook: Tom said there is a tree in Mill Brook out by the covered bridge near Matteson's. Tom said we need to get it out of there next time Rice Tree Service does work for the town.
- 6) Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission contract – Glenn recommended that the Selectboard sign the revised contract for \$6,600. **Tom made a motion to approve and sign the contract. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
- 7) Adjourn - **Tom made a motion to adjourn at 10:10 AM. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison