

WEST WINDSOR SELECTBOARD

Draft Minutes
January 5, 2012

Present: Glenn Seward, Bruce Boedtke, Tom Kenyon, Dennis Lemire, Cathy Boedtke, Laura Stillson, Jason Rasmussen, Jim Lyall, Martha Harrison

- 1) Call to Order – Selectboard Chair Glenn Seward called the meeting to order at 7:35 AM.
- 2) Review Town Forest Management Plan – Jason Rasmussen from the regional planning commission provided a draft plan and associated maps. Jason said he has solicited comments from Forest Ecologist Tii McLane and various state officials, including Forrest Hammond and Mary Beth Adler. Jason said he has not heard from County Forester Jon Bouton yet. Jason said he also sent a draft to Tim Morton. There was discussion about Mary Beth Adler’s suggestion to close South Ridge Run in mid-September when bears are feeding on mast. Jim said that is the most popular trail. Bruce asked what Forrest Hammond thinks. Jason said he will follow up with Forrest. Bruce said he doesn’t think this plan should provide that level of detail. The Town Forest Committee (TFC) agreed to keep the language in the plan more general. Cathy said the plan references Tii McLane’s report so the two documents should be consistent. There was discussion about whether or not there should be a 300’ buffer around the talus area/potential bobcat habitat. Laura said talus slopes are extremely fragile and access should be limited. Jim said the area by the quarry gets a lot of traffic. Cathy said, according to Tii’s report, she didn’t actually identify any bobcat in the area. Laura said she has seen bobcat tracks. Cathy said she doesn’t think the talus area should be identified as “bobcat habitat.” Tom agreed that general language is better than specific language. Glenn said the interim town forest regulations require Selectboard approval for new trails. The TFC agreed to remove reference to specific numbers. There was discussion about signage. Dennis suggested that the TFC make signage recommendations to the Selectboard for their approval. Cathy said the TFC should also make recommendations to the Selectboard about maps, equestrian usage, etc. Jason said there can be conflicts between horses and bikes and he wasn’t sure how the TFC wants to address that issue. Bruce said he thinks the trail map should just show single-track and double-track trails and not identify their uses. Jim agreed and added that the trail map should not indicate degree of difficulty either. Tom asked if the plan is going to have to be modified every time the TFC and the Selectboard want to do something in the town forest. Jason said there’s no statutory authority associated with the plan unless the town gives it such authority through the town plan. Bruce said the plan will have requirements associated with it once it gets to Act 250. Bruce said the TFC should probably update the town forest plan every five years. There was discussion about fires. Jim suggested prohibiting fires without a permit. Everyone agreed. Jason suggested that, rather than prohibiting commercial logging, the plan could say that timber harvesting is not a priority for the town forest. Those present agreed. Jim noted that Jason removed the former trails from the map and said he likes having them on the map to help with orientation and for historical purposes. Laura said we don’t want people on trails that are not maintained. Cathy said she’s okay with including former trails on this map, but not on the map that will be posted in the kiosk. Jason agreed to put the former trails back on the map. Those present agreed that the orientation map should show Coaching Lane Extension, the parking area and the right-of-way off Kimball Farm Road. Those present agreed to include the “potential wind energy” map, which came from the VT renewable energy atlas. Jason noted that there is no real commercial scale wind energy potential. Those present liked the “forest stands” map with minor adjustments. Regarding the wildlife habitat suitability map, those present suggested minor changes to the legend. Jason said he used Tii’s “natural communities” map to assign values to wildlife habitats but he needs to review those values with Tii. Regarding vernal pools, Bruce suggested that the legend indicate that the pools shown are the ones identified to date so as not to imply that there are no other vernal pools in the town forest. Those present

agreed. Those present also agreed that the colors on the legend need to be adjusted. Cathy suggested changing the label from “bobcat habitat” to “talus area” and removing the 300’ buffer. Laura said she doesn’t think we should be destroying potential bobcat habitat by putting new trails in that area. Jason said since buffers around wetlands are not shown on the map, maybe buffers around talus areas should not be shown either. Laura said she intends to avoid that area when she re-routes the Bicentennial trail. Martha said the average person is not going to know what “talus area” means or that it’s potential bobcat habitat. Jason agreed that they will not know unless they read the text. Those present agreed to refer to “talus areas” and not include a buffer. Jim said the colors used to indicate “exotic invasive species” and “soil enrichment areas” are too similar. Jason asked about the “recommended improvements” map. Those present agreed not to include it with the published maps. Cathy said the town forest management plan was not developed in coordination with STAB so that sentence should be removed. Everyone agreed to state that STAB developed the trails and the trail map. Cathy asked if West Windsor should have an agreement with Weathersfield regarding maintenance of the Weathersfield Trail since it goes through the West Windsor Town Forest. Tom said there must be an agreement because they had to get an Act 250 permit to move the trail. Glenn said he thinks the existing language is fine. Everyone agreed. Cathy asked if the text references to bobcat habitat are consistent with Tii’s report. Jason said he will check. Cathy said she’d like the history section to be chronological. Cathy suggested removing the reference to the recreational trail network in town (i.e. outside the town forest). Jim said he thinks the text should mention the trails on adjacent Resort property. Everyone agreed. Tom asked if there is anything in the plan that would prevent the state from introducing spruce grouse. Jason said he doesn’t think so. Laura said the higher elevations would be perfect for that. There was discussion about the trail maintenance agreement, whether and how it should be referenced, and when it expires. A public meeting on the town forest management plan was tentatively scheduled for February 7th at 6:30 PM.

- 3) **Glenn moved to adjourn at 8:45 AM. Tom seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison