**Destination Groton Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday March 23, 2022**

**Present via Zoom: Greg Sheldon, Mairi Elliott, Jeff Gordon, Julie Platt and Joni Parker-Roach**

**Attendees: Judy Anderson**

**Keiko Orall , Sheila Harrington**

**Agenda item A- Call meeting to order**

Meeting opened by Greg Sheldon at 6:21pm

**Agenda Item B- Approve/discuss minutes from 3/15/2022**

**MOTION: Made by Mairi Elliott to approve the minutes of 3/15/2022**

2nd by Jeff Gordon Roll Call vote: Greg Sheldon, Mairi Elliott, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker- Roach, Julie Platt- **Unanimously Approved**

**Agenda Item C-Short Term initiative Updates**

1. **Line-Item Request to Select Board**

Greg Sheldon states that the Select Board will be meeting next Monday and on the agenda is to approve our budget request for FY22 and Budget proposal for FY23

He ran through a slide presentation he plans to make Monday 3/28/22

Suggests that Jeff Gordon speak to the GBA giving incentives to it’s members for videos created with $50 off of the $300 cost

J. Parker-Roach asks if we have a set deadline for videos to be complete

G. Sheldon states it will be more of a rolling process

1. **Public Forums-**

M. Elliott tells group that she has procured May 22 at the Groton Center for forum #1 from 2-4 and reviews the details sent by Ashley Shaheen Director of the Council on Aging. States we will need to have an AV training prior to using the space.

M. Elliott will set up time to be trained and J. Gordon will attend as well

J. Parker- Roach wanted clarification on what format we are using for each venue.

Group agrees that World café format is to be used at first two forums and then a more standard question and answer session

J.P-R will have her husband Patrick join our next meeting to go over the details of the format with us and help us craft our questions

G. Sheldon reminds the group that we want to keep these relatively short so as not to lose attention span. Approximately 1.5 hours each

J. Platt states she has done some research on banner printing and shows a mock up on a banner for main street that includes all three dates and that the cost is approx. $130

G. Sheldon suggests we add locations to the banner

M. Elliott suggests it is now time for us to start a facebook page to help get the word out about forums- She will start one this week

G. Sheldon asks Leads of Public Forums Jeff Gordon and Joni Parker- Roach to create a timeline for us to stick to with Dates for events. i.e when we need to have banner delivered by, what days we put it up, when we need to get things done prior, etc.

**Agenda Item D- MOTT Director Keiko Orall and Sheila Harrington**

**Joined meeting at 7pm**

Mrs. Orall is welcomed by committee members and asked if she has become familiar with our purpose. She has an overview of what we are trying to accomplish and a good idea of how she can be of use to us.

G. Sheldon makes presentation to her regarding the upcoming opening of the Groton Hill Music center and what the GBA report conclusions were. He points to a culminating event in 2030 of the 375th anniversary. He asks how we can work in parallel with MOTT and the “One Stop” for grant money.

Sheila Harrington joins meeting- She brings up the March 31 deadline for FY22 MOTT grant and if we are ready for that.

G. Sheldon states that there is a caveat in that Grant stating the town must have spent 15k on travel and tourism in the previous year which he believes disqualifies us from grant money for FY22

Ms. Orall congratulates the committee on work done so far and enthusiasm and agrees that we may not have time for this years application, however there are several other avenues to pursue. She mentions the Cultural Facilities Fund for hardscapes in addition to the One stop and MOTT.

She then presents a slideshow of what MOTT focuses on and their current initiatives. Main points being Tourism, Sports and Film industries.

She mentions: Discover New England, US Travel Association and Brand US as allied partners.

She states MA is ranked #20 out of all states for tourism

She points to the impact Covid had on the tourism industry

She mentions Roy Nacimiento (?) as being our contact to reach out to at the Johnny Appleseed Trail regional council

G. Sheldon brings up that Groton really borders three of the state regions and asks if it behooves us to get in to partnerships with those to access more funding

She states yes that can be very helpful and mentions Rick Lafria (?) of Greater Merrimack Valley to be a point of contact as well.

She states that MOTT is the umbrella to many marketing venues

The Destination Development Capital Grant for infrastructure are at 2mil for FY22 and 4mill for FY23- Max grant being awarded at a time is $250k

J. Gordon asks if the grant money comes with restrictions on Vendor usage or a need for bid requests- K. Orall does not know that answer but will add to her frequently asked questions and give us an answer when she finds out

Ms. Orall mentions that the Regional Tourism Council has grants for marketing as well

G. Sheldon brings up that Sturbridge has received a $350k grant for marketing in the past.

Ms. Orall states that sounds like it could have been legislative earmark money not a grant that she is aware of,

She brings up the next Grant opportunity as being the Travel and Tourism Season Extension Grant that would be a Regional Chamber of commerce to apply for

She mentions that the MOTT website is VisitMA.com and that we can link our pages to it

J. Gordon asks if she has recommendations for names of website “has there been a trend” or “do you recommend a name”

She states just to be careful about already existing names and double meanings

She mentions that the film industry is a large growing business in MA and there are now 30 productions underway in the state

She Points out the MOTT initiative of #MylocalMA to feature local businesses and she states they have an e-newsletter as well.

G. Sheldon brings up our vertical video project and that would be a great way to highlight them

Ms. Orall brings up the resource toolkit available to municipalities for marketing resources for local eats and businesses

She also points out that Canada, Germany and the UK have been our largest source international tourism historically

Sheila Harrington brings up Alan Manoian in Ayer as great resource for us to help us put together a strategic plan and asks if there is a grant for a position like that

Ms. Oral is unaware of one because it would be an ongoing salary need not a one time grant, but suggests Legislative Earmarks could be more useful

G. Sheldon asks what other strategic partners should we bring in, He mentions Juan Vega of the Executive Office of Housing and Development.

She brings up the Arts+Culture MA Cultural Council as being a potential great resource for us.

Sheila Harrington suggests we call John Cronin sooner than later to put in a request for earmark money for FY22 as they are going in to budget session in April.

She suggests creating a 501c for money handling or creating the Destination Groton Trust

G. Sheldon states we have many projects spanning many categories and does she recommend a specific grant that would cover many things or a contact to help coordinate

She suggests Michael Bobbit at the MA Cultural Council

G. Sheldon mentions to her the Earl Carter Museum and our goals there and she suggests that could be served well by the Cultural Facilities fund

She also suggests that we Partner with the Trustees of Reservations for our monuments projects

She tells the group that she is working toward the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution and we could tie into that with our rich pertinent history

J. Gordon expresses his gratitude for her guidance and asks if she recommends a consultant- She states she works with larger regional partnerships and one would not be in align with what we are doing

Sheila points out that we should be partnering with the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce

M. Elliott asks if there is a “gold standard” in her eyes to follow as far as what towns have done to increase their visibility and tourism

Ms. Orall points to New Bedford as having had just done a massive overhaul and it is now done very well. She suggests not re-inventing the wheel and looking for what has worked and how to follow it. She states – Keep it Simple

Meeting with the Honorable Sheila Harrington and Ms. Keiko Orall ended at 8:17pm

**Committee wrap up-**

J. Gordon states that it was encouraging to hear that once we start on a roll one thing will lead to another and it builds upon itself

M. Elliott states learning that we can request legislative earmark funding is very important and we should add that to our immediate to-do list

G. Sheldon will contact his office and try to set up a meeting either in person or via zoom with him ASAP

He suggests we consider looking in to creating a 501c and start doing some research on the benefits

**Motion to adjourn meeting made at 8:30pm by Julie Platt**

**Greg Sheldon 2nd**

**Unanimously approved in roll call vote – M. Elliott, J. Gordon, Joni Parker-Roach, Julie Platt and Greg Sheldon.**