**Destination Groton Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday March 30, 2022**

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

**Attendees: Judy Anderson, Patrick Parker-Roach**

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

Meeting opened by Greg Sheldon at 6:16pm

**Agenda Item B- Approve/discuss minutes from 3/23/2022**

**MOTION: Made by Joni Parker-Roach to approve the minutes of 3/23/2022**

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

**Agenda Item C-Selectboard budget request recap**

G. Sheldon- recaps for those not in attendance of the Select Board meeting on 3/28. Describes that we met some resistance but ultimately were awarded $15,000 for FY22 and $12,600 for FY23

G. Sheldon asks those in attendance to give their takeaways from the meeting

M. Elliott stated that it was a win for the committee whether we hit unexpected opposition or not and now our task is to prove those who are unsure of what the impact of this spending will be exactly how useful it will be for the town.

J. Parker- Roach states she was taken aback back the strong opposition from members of the same committee that voted unanimously to approve the creation of our committee and knowing that it would take some investment on the towns part

Judy Anderson reminds the committee that are many that oppose Groton Hill music and attitudes on the Board of Selectman may not always be in our favor.

G. Sheldon states our immediate priority is how to spend this money before FY23

He states he called and spoke with the Office of Travel and Tourism and discovered that Public Forums would not be considered Travel and Tourism and would no go towards the amount we need to spend to get that requirement of spending 15k in FY22 on Tourism

He puts to the group how we can cover the $500 we have earmarked for Forums.

Committee as a group had discussion on how to move the funds and how the matching portion of the MOTT Grant works

Ultimately group decides to remove public forums from our budget line items to be submitted to MOTT at application time next year

J. Gordon volunteers funds from the Groton Business Association to cover any of the Non tourism dollars that we need to spend.

G. Sheldon asks group to look at budget over the next week to determine where is best to place the extra $500 we need to spend on Tourism

He asks for us to identify upcoming town events we could advertise and be a part of promoting

States that we could advertise for events through July while staying within FY22 spending

J. Platt mentions the Groton Road Race as being a large upcoming draw to the town and she has a connection with the Sqaunacook River Runners and she will reach out

G. Sheldon asks the group who is putting together the master calendar

M. Elliott replies that that responsibility seemed to have been shifted to David Wang for the Visitors center

She also mentions that she has found a community calendar application called “Timely” where entities can input their own events to a master calendar

Judy asks if there is a goal with the grant request we will be making next year

G. Sheldon states we will be working on that over this year. Application portal doesn’t open until January 2023 and apps due the End of March 2023

Judy asks if some of the projects we have in mind are projects that other Committees are working on or could pay for

G. Sheldon states we will be methodical in our determination of what funding we are asking for He states it is a 1:1 matching grant and however much we are granted we need to pay back after two years

J. Gordon asks to clarify if we need to spend 15k in 3 months time

The committee affirms that yet reassures that we can prepay for some things that have yet to be completed by June 30, 2022.

G. Sheldon mentions that according to the Town Budget proposal we will not be able to fund and economic developer position until 2024.

M. Elliott brings up the Legislative earmarks that we will be requesting with Senator Cronin in our upcoming meeting and perhaps a good use of those funds would be for a Positon like that to get started sooner than later

J. Platt states it could be a consultant position or suggest a grant writer position as well

G. Sheldon brings up the newly announced Service fee on Groton Hill Music tickets and that Select Board member Peter Cunningham seemed to be in support of the idea of some of those funds coming to our committee on an annual basis

He states he would like to schedule our first advisory board meeting in the coming weeks

He will circulate the current list to the committee over the week and they will add names if they feel someone is missing

**Upcoming meeting with Senator Cronin**

G. Sheldon discusses the available dates to meet with Mark Haddad and Senator Cronin and his assistant. The committee discusses personal availability. Mr. Sheldon will reconnect with the Senators office to propose a date in which we all can attend if not will revert to 4/19 in which most of committee except J. Parker- Roach can attend

Sheldon points out that Senator Cronin is appointed to the Senatorial Committee of Travel and Tourism

He asks the committee to research and think over the week on what we would like to have funded by an earmark

J. Platt states she is concerned about infrastructure and perhaps a consultant could help us organize our thinking in what to do first

M. Elliott brings up the Earl Carter Museum and a use of funding to purchase The Garrison building in the Center of Town as it’s the oldest building in Groton and would make a great home for the collection

G. Sheldon states the Senators assistant Susan Templeton was very excited to hear from us and is looking forward to our meeting

HE state he was connected via Keiko Orall to Juan Vega at Executive office of Housing and Development – he is waiting to make actual contact

He suggests the committee mee with Tom Delaney, Takashi Tada and perhaps members of the Conservation Trust to discover what pressing projects they have and how we can help – He will set up a meeting

**Public Forums**

M. Elliott states that she was told by J. Gordon that we could not book Groton Wood on the June date we wanted, and it had been requested to move the Groton Center Date to June 12 and the GrotonWood date could them be May 22 from 3-5

New Forum Dates and locations

May 22, 2022 Groton Wood 3-5pm

June 7, 2022 Prescott Center 7-9pm

June 12, 2022 Groton Center 2-4 pm

Patrick Parker- Roach joins meeting at 7:23pm

G. Sheldon runs through his idea of how we would open each session and then the timeline of running the World Café within that. Laying out that he intended to leave about 1 hour for world café activities and then asks Patrick if that is enough time.

Patrick states in general it is not. He runs through the World café process and lays out that generally there are three rounds of 15 minutes each for each question we want to ask. At two questions that is an hour and a half. He states it can be done in two rounds for time. He clarifies that time spent is not dependent on size of crowd. He states that it works best with a minimum of 4 people at each table. He then lays out that at each round the people get up and disperse to a table with all new people at it and start discussing the same topic again.

As people sit and talk the common answers get recorded and displayed

He states the real work is coming up with the questions to glean the knowledge and engagement we are looking for

He suggests some starting point questions might be “What are the important issues” and “How would you address these issues”

J. Gordon states he feels we need to ask more questions and suggests we ask different questions at each forum

Patrick states that may dilute the answers we get and people may end up feeling like they didn’t have the same opportunity if they aren’t asked the same questions

G. Sheldon asks committee to think about whether we should have 2 questions for all or more

Committee starts discussion around working of questions to get Patrick’s opinion on the impact they may have

G. Sheldon suggest to take from the GBA report and ask “What are some of the challenges you see that Groton faces with becoming a destination town” and “ What are some of the possibilities you see”

J. Gordon asks if we should craft the question to be more solution based around specific issues like traffic or congestion

G. Sheldon states he wants to impress upon attendees that preserving our way of life is of utmost importance

J. Parker-Roach states it is more a about messaging back to the community that Groton being a hub for Culture and Arts is what is has been from the beginning and we are just trying to embrace that in today’s modern world

G. Sheldon states these Forums are to promote the “Unity in Community”

Patrick suggests that we lead with the positive and ask exciting positive question in first round so as not to set a negative mindset

M. Elliott asks if a question like “how can we help you feel engaged in this process” would be helpful for mindset through change in town.

G. Sheldon states we are bridging the gap from fear to opportunity

Patrick Parker-Roach suggests we build on the benefits for the consumer

He also asks if we have considered geographical locations of these events- Yes we have

G. Sheldon asks committee to think on questions for next week and Patrick will join us again next week to help us hone in on the right questions

**Marketing**

G. Sheldon suggest we look in to all ways to promote the forums including electric bill insert and or water bill. Committee makes suggestions of School handouts, council on aging newsletter, Groton Channel announcement, Social Media announcements, Evite and local cable access shows

He asks for Forum leads Joni and Jeff to put together a timeline of tasks for us to complete prior to the forums by next week

J, Gordon and J. Parker- Roach will meet at library on Friday 4/1 at 10am to discuss

**Other issues**

Priority- get more specific on spending 15k, Logo and design work should come first. J. Gordon will reach out to Scott to see if there is a conflict of interest in him creating a logo for us.

G. Sheldon asks J. Gordon to also engage him on the master plan and how we as a committee can be involved with the planning board as they write the new Master Plan

He has reached out to Bob DeGroot and Rich Chilcott to engage in identifying historical sites that could be put on National Historic register

He would like to discuss further with Takashi Tada about grant coordination

J. Gordon suggest we add Kevin Lindemere to the Advisory for his expertise in economics and numbers

G. Sheldon suggests that we all study other destination towns and come back with ideas

Puts and idea to the committee around Rebuilding Bancroft Castle

J. Gordon asks J. Platt about the land near the current Platt shop and if it is available for development

J. Platt states they are in discussion with owner over sale to them

J. Gordon asks about the other properties on Station ave

J. Platt is unsure of their status

G, Sheldon reminds committee of the 2014 vision plan for Station Ave and wants to bring as much of that as we can to life.

He states there may be potential for parking garage behind Prescott school as he learned at the last weeks Select Board meeting that the Board did not endorse giving that land to the parks commission as they intend to maintain control of it and suggested a parking garage.

**Action Plans:**

Get specific on spending for Marketing budget

Create Calendar of Events for the year to reference for promotion

Create World Café Questions

Rework Banner for center of town with new dates and changed colors

J. Platt will schedule time with the town for banner to be hung- j. Gordon has a contact who can guide us in that- will connect with Julie.

**Motion to Adjourn meeting at 8:53 pm made by Julie Platt**

**2nd by Joni Parker- Roach**

**Unanimously approved by roll call vote: Greg Sheldon, Mairi Elliott, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker- Roach and Julie Platt**