**Destination Groton Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday April 13, 2022**

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

**Attendees: Judy Anderson**

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

**Motion Made by Julie Platt to open meeting**

**2nd by Joni Parker-Roach**

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

Meeting opened by Greg Sheldon at 6:30pm

Notes that this is our 12th meeting

**Agenda Item B- Approve/discuss minutes from 4/6/2022**

Discussion to change salary range for DEDC is $70k-$90k, Change Judd Patton to Doug Patton, and to put quotes around Destination Groton Café, and to include “graphic” to JParker-Roach’s recording style

**MOTION: Made by Mairi Elliott to approve the minutes of 4/6/2022**

2nd by Joni Parker-Roach

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

**Agenda Item C- Strategic Initiatives**

**Letter for GELD distribution**

GSheldon describes a week of ups and downs getting the mailing in on time to GELD and the weight factor of the envelope being an issue, ultimately he was successful in getting the Public Forum notice to be put in all electric bills for the May 1 billing and subsequently for June 1, at a cost of $250 each mailing.

JGordon asks if the GBA needs to write a check

GSheldon states he is requesting CPA funds for the forums and to hold off until we have a response from them

GSheldon- Art restoration funds of 11k were funded in previous fiscal year so they will not count towards grant matching monies. He states that Karen Tuomi told him that she knew of $6,600 spent on Fireworks display in 2021 and $2,000 on GrotonFest and he is seeing if these will count as tourism funds.

JParker-Roach points out that the History Center spent $17k on the Sense of Place Project which hosted artists in 3 different venues in Fall of 2021 but will verify when the funds were actually spent. He wonders if those funds could be counted as tourism for Grant matching

MElliott asks if that was private donations or Town Funds, JParker-Roach states it was a combination of fundraising efforts and grants, JGordon asks for clarification if the Town itself needs to be the one paying for things in order to qualify as a tourism expense that will be counted for grant matching

JParker-Roach brings up Steve Harrington as a desirable partner to have onboard as a marketing expert. He is widely experienced in developing marketing plans, logo design, etc. She is making efforts to connect with him to engage him in consulting with herself and MElliott to develop a thorough and well thought out marketing plan.

GSheldon states he has spoken with Mr. Chilcoat regarding the Earl Carter Museum and that Beverly Smith is now involved in determining some solutions for where to move the collection.

GSheldon shows Attachment A of letter being sent to GELD for distribution

Committee all approve the letter

GSheldon wonders if the upstairs meeting room is the right venue for our meeting with Senator Cronin. He would like it to be more of a round table feel and be more intimate. Committee discussed and agreed to request with Mr. Haddad that we move the meeting to the downstairs meeting room.

JGordon suggests we give the Senator a tour of Town Hall and then meet downstairs

GSheldon explains that the second half of our meeting on Tuesday 4/19 is to discuss with Mark Haddad and Takashi Tada grants and grant writing. He also explained that during the meeting with the Senator he intends to arrange a future meeting with the Senator and Juan Vega (EOHD), Marc Zappulla (MOTT), and Michael Bobbitt (MA Cultural Council). He mentions that sadly Ton Delaney will not be available at the time of this meeting, but it is imperative that we meet with him soon for his input on infrastructure needs.

Sheldon brings a drawing of a rotary design for 119 and Old Ayer Road.

JPlatt pushes back on the idea of a rotary there, MElliott reminds him that that common is an historical site. JPlatt mentions the historic markers on both sides of 119 there.

Judy Anderson brings up that the Prescott Stone was moved.

JPlatt shows a drawing of what the previous traffic study recommendation was with making the right hand turn from 119 to Old Ayer be a one way and to put a stop sign at intersection. She goes on to discuss the width of 119 and having no designated parking spots along the sides is confusing for visitors and sometimes people pass rather than staying in one lane.

MElliott wonders if Earmark money should be spent on a civil engineer to do a full traffic study from CVS down 119 to the Elementary and Middle Schools

Judy states it has been done for Prescott Common but not further and adds that the reason the one way was not created at Old Ayer was citizen push back.

GSheldon suggests a statue of William Prescott at the Common - adds that there is one of him at Bunker Hill so why shouldn’t there be one in his hometown and on his named Common.

Committee has discussion around a rotary vs. the engineered suggestion and what the townspeople would be happiest with.

G Sheldon suggest we focus on a statue, signage and the potential for moving historical markers

MElliott pushes back on moving markers

JParkerRoach brings up the intersection of Broadmeadow and Rt.40 and makes a suggestion of concrete bump outs to hinder passing on the side. She also brings to the committee’s attention that often people drive up the wrong way on Broadmeadow and that the exit access through Lawrence Academy property may not be available in the future depending on what LA decides.

MElliott reiterates that this is why we need a larger scope of traffic study done for whole center of town

GSheldon brings up that a parking garage could be a solution

JPlatt pushes back on parking garage in town and suggests there may only be a few days that traffic and parking become a true problem in the center and suggests that parking spots on Main Street could be enough to solve the problem

GSheldon goes back to the Station Ave. overlay plan and states that it makes sense to turn those homes into businesses and to place a garage where the warehouse is currently.

JGordon suggests the open space behind current BOA and Citizens Bank would be a great place for parking, but the owner of the Citizens building has not agreed to it in the past.

JPlatt states that these are just our ideas in the room and that the Public Forums could produce even better ideas

Judy states that now that the Station House is for “events Only” there will be more parking available there.

GSheldon states we need to be frank at the forums about traffic and parking issues and ask them how to address these issues and identify the problems

JGordon relates that he feels as though citizens will not be amenable to any change in parking or traffic flow until Groton Hill opens and the problems present themselves

Committee agrees but wants to shape the conversation to how do we get ahead of the problems

Judy states that positive public feedback would come from us addressing the traffic and parking regardless of Groton Hill music impact, and the flow issues we have now are significant enough to be addressed and that would make the people happy.

JPlatt asks what our role as a committee is in the meeting with Mark and Takashi Tada

GSheldon explains that we are there to ask any and all questions and we are a fresh set of eyes on the issues of the town. He wants us to learn what they have done successfully in the past, what strategies have worked best and what current applications are out. He reinforces that our project vision is 8 years out.

JGordon asks how many will be in attendance with the Senator

GSheldon lays out that the Senator and his aides, as well as our town finance manager, Mark Haddad and Takashi Tada

JGordon asks if we should take the Senator on a tour of Groton Hill, as it is the impetus for our work

Committee discussion about the Senator’s time and how to get him oriented with the scope of Groton Hill prior to our meeting.

Judy Anderson suggests that Groton Hill has produced several videos and we can show him one

MElliott suggests we put the link in to our agenda to be sent out to Senator and staff prior to meeting- committee agreed

GSheldon gets into what we are specifically asking the Senator for and lays out the marketing budget for the next 3 years to include Groton and the Nashoba Valley. (See attachment B on agenda)

JPlatt asks if we should have Melissa Fetterhoff in on our meeting

JGordon suggests that the smaller the better for initial meeting, but we can bring her in on a subsequent meeting. He also asks, regarding the budget request, if that is to include an Economic Development position. GSheldon states we cannot request monies for an ongoing position

MElliott states that we can, however, hire a consultant and some of this money should be spent on that for the first year prior to the Town approving a budget for a full time position

GSheldon states he will revise the budget to include a consultant for economic development

JPlatt reads out the towns that are in Senator Cronin’s district are Fitchburg, Gardner and Leominster and the towns of Berlin, Bolton, Clinton precincts 1 and 2, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Sterling and Westminster in the county of Worcester; and the town of Townsend in the county of Middlesex with Groton being newly added

She also reads that he is committed to drawing tourism to Gateway cities.

It is noted that Pepperell is not included in that and we will be having a meeting with the Select Board Chair of Pepperell and it could be helpful to have Senator Kennedy to collaborate with as well.

JGordon asks of there will be a proposed follow up meeting for the Senator to have a chance to tour Groton Hill Music

GSheldon states that he believes he can tie that in to the second part of the “ask” for a meeting with the MOTT, EOHD and MA Cultural Council to be held at Groton Hill and to tou then.

Committee heartily agrees with this proposal

Sheldon goes on to reinforce that the purpose of that meeting would be to organize grants over the next 10 years with tourism in mind

JGordon states that he feels strongly that Senator Cronin not make his Earmark decision until he tours Groton Hill to get the scope of the impact on the Town

MElliott asks if the number we are asking for is in ballpark for the average Earmark, Sheldon states it is a reasonable ask based on other earmarks that have gone into the millions

JGordon wonders if we aren’t asking for enough, Sheldon justifies this number with comparing to Sturbridge who received $375k which turned their trajectory around and our $450k is scaled up slightly. He reinforces that we need a solid marketing plan to justify.

JParkerbRoach states we need an overall marketing plan in place before we start doing “one off” advertisements and meeting with a marketing planner is of utmost importance

How do we spend $100k in marketing- JGordon and MElliott reply with billboards, radio spots and TV ads in addition to print ads and videos

Sheldon mentions that Lisa Fiorentino of Groton Hill wants to meet with us and he suggests making that a combination visit if the Senator is to return. She would like to coordinate co-marketing with us and we would like some strategic placement in her programs

JGordon suggests the Nashoba Valley Chamber can advertise for us as well

Judy Anderson asks the committee “what happens if we don’t get the grant and Town does not approve an Ec. Dev. full time position for FY24?”

Committee discusses how to pay for a FY24 economic developer and that the Select Board was initially fully behind the idea at our committee’s creation so it is assumed the position will be approved but that opinions and members can change in that time and nothing is guaranteed.

MEllliott suggests earmark should include at least two years of consultant

JPlatt states it is key for us to get the vision across to him for the future, rather then needing help to solve problems as they arise.

GSheldon moves on to Earl Carter and tells committee that Mr. Chilcoat is working with Mr. Carter and whether or not we are part of the conversation it is moving forward in a positive direction

Sheldon then asks the group “how do we get more historical sites in town”

MElliott hands out a portion of the Archeological Survey of 2011 produced by the Historical Commission that identifies numerous areas of historic interest with suggestions of places for educational plaques - this should be part of our discussion with Bob DeGroot, who was a member at the time of its writing. Elliott will send link out of full survey for committee to review but states it can be found on town website

Side discussion on needing to improve the Town Website - functionality is low

Sheldon points out that Groton is the site of the first Women’s College of Landscaping and that certainly should be celebrated. He will add the Survey and its points of interest to the agenda of our meeting with Mr. DeGroot

GSheldon goes on to state that he has learned that the Prescott Center is applying CPC funds to fund a college student “Ambassador” for the Prescott Center, and it has inspired him to request $1k in funds from CPC for our public forums, he is getting supportive advice from Karen Tuomi who told him that after our first letter went out for advisory membership, she was unsure of how to contact us.

MElliott follows up on the idea of us getting Town emails suggested by Mark Haddad in an early meeting of our committee - Sheldon will follow up with Haddad on this so the community has better access to us.

MElliott shows a full page ad for the town of Groton that she would like to place in Nashoba Valley Living that runs every 6 months and is sent for free to Nashoba Valley residents and placed in public distribution areas. The committee likes the ad and discusses the need for it this early. JParker-Roach brings up the conversation that she and MElliott had regarding this and that they agree that it is a good way for our townspeople to see that we are working already to bring tourism to town. The ad is handed around and some changes are suggested to make it a ¼ page sized ad, remove the wording at the bottom for the size and change the line “Come for the Beauty, stay for the Culture” to “Come for the Beauty, stay for the Experience”

She will make changes and send to Publisher. Asks for how to get it funded and group advises to connect with Mark Haddad for invoicing.

JGordon has spoken to a web designer about our needs and has been advised that $7k should cover design, wire diagram, layout and hosting

JPlatt mentions that if we do our site through Wordpress she discovered that they have a linkable calendar that people can add their own events to.

JPlatt gently suggests to GSheldon that now that we meet weekly, we need to have a hard stop at an earlier time. After some discussion it is suggested and planned that we will stop no later than 8:30pm when meetings start at 6:15pm.

**Motion to adjourn made by Julie Platt at 9:06pm**

**2nd by Jeff Gordon**

**Roll call vote:** Greg Sheldon, Mairi Elliott, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker-Roach, Julie Platt

**Unanimously agreed**