**Destination Groton Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday June 23, 2022**

**2:30pm**

**First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

**Present:** **Greg Sheldon, Jeff Gordon, Mairi Elliott, Joni Parker-Roach (arrived at 3pm), Julie Platt**

**Attendees: Judy Anderson**

**Meeting opened by Greg Sheldon at 2:40pm**

**Agenda item 1- Approve Minutes from June 9, 12 and 15**

**MOTION: Jeff Gordon Moves to approved meeting minutes from 6/9/22, 6/15/22 and 6/15/22 2nd by Julie Platt Roll Call: Mairi Elliott, Greg Sheldon, Joni Parker-Roach, Julie Platt, Jeff Gordon**

**Agenda Item 3-Marketing proposals**

Julie Platt brings in banner she had purchased for Public forum but explains that it was not approved by Town to hang because it was not thick enough to withstand wind. GSheldon makes note that she will be paid back for the $150 expenditure out of the FY23 DGC budget. Discussion on how we can display sign on day off Public Forum outside of Prescott. JPlatt explains that she has a plan to have it staked and displayed in Prescott Park. JGordon offers to help.

**Promotion:**

GSheldon that the event will be in this week’s “happenings” and that we can expect 2 letters to the editor in this week’s Groton Herald. He advised each committee member to personally invite at least 12 people. MElliott explains the thank you email sent to all previous attendees along with invite to this next forum.

**Categories to display:**

JPlatt asks how the main categories that we have identified and JParker-Roach has complied from World café’s will be displayed. GSheldon describes his plan of having the questions and the lists of answers displayed and having Patrick Parker-Roach report out from each. He emphasizes that we are “probing for input, reactions and thoughts to identify problems and propose solutions” He will discuss how these categories that rose to the top at the previous forums through discussion and how they give us guidelines on how to proceed especially along the lines of identifying funding. JPlatt again asks if we are somehow prioritizing our categories in our presentation to the public. JParker-Roach joins the conversation at 3pm and adds that she will be hanging that charts for forums and create a new one at the Forum to capture issues and thoughts that come up. GSheldon asks her how we can edit the list from the extensive compilation she put together to denote what was mentioned the most or what hot button topics came up. JParker-Roach brings up that she heard many times requests for a family friendly pub style restaurant. JPlatt mentions that a true dog park came up in conversations she was witness to.

GSheldon then tries to boil those categories down. Are Restaurants Infrastructure or Economic Development? He then brings up the Letter from Stephen Shepard again and the study he did from the Center for Creative Development and what Groton Hill Music could bring to the region in economic impact. He states that it is expected to be $21mil ramping up over the first 3 years. He will follow up with Lisa Fiorentino for an economic development studies or traffic studies that GHM has done thus far. He states the genesis of this committee will be to identify our share of that and make it benefit Groton residents directly.

JParker-Roach states that an important piece of that is to be present and accessible to new businesses wanting to come to town.

JPlatt wonders how we best maximize and capture that economic impact for Groton and relay that to the town. GSheldon agrees this is an important point to get across when considering the small amount of current commercial/retail space available in town. JParker-Roach joins in saying that it its important to be in a position to show people the potential for revenue increase and to embrace it.

The committee enters a discussion on how to highlight the categories that came up previously as possibilities with an emphasis on the positive.

GSheldon brings up another point he heard made often at world café’s as “why are we marketing the town?”

JGordon states our answer should be simple. “It is the only way we see our ability to increase revenue and reduce tax burden on the town.” JPlatt stated that she heard a table of people stating that they did not want Groton to be marketed in anyway and that they did not want to share our assets with outsiders.

Judy Anderson states that it will be helpful to us to highlight the current revenue from meals and room tax and how that is expected to increase with careful capture of the incoming visitors. She also points out the $2 ticket tax estimated to be $160k/year and that we should mention that in presentation.

GSheldon then leads the conversation that his relationship with the current Director of Economic Development in Ayer. He states that while in the beginning he was very friendly and open to sharing ideas but he has since indicated that he is not willing to share information and plans with us as we are in direct competition for our portion of the increase on revenue.

GSheldon goes backto format of presentation being Intro, Findings and Q&A. Jeff Gordon asks the committee again if he should shorten the video committee reiterates that at last meeting they decided to keep video in at full length with the caveat at the beginning that the video had been made last year and some items are outdated.

JGordon states that he feels strongly that we need to tabulate our info and findings for our presentation. Committee delineates top priorities as parking, infrastructure and traffic. Gordon states that it is important to emphasize that all issues that have risen to the top our current day issues that we need to solve regardless of Groton hill music's presence.

Judy Anderson points out how the town looked 10 years ago and that it will continue to grow and change and states if we can solve today's problems we solve the problems of the future.

Greg Sheldon states that having Joni pointing calling out issues to the uninitiated from previous meetings will help inform the public of our charge and our findings. Julie Platt states that the ideas will be right in front of people and they can ask about what they see.

GSheldon then brings up the series of ARPA funding and that we have one year to apply and 2 years to spend. He would like us to focus on solving a “state issue” with traffic on 119. He reminds the committee of Ana Eliot’s input on a Park and Ride and states that it’s ideas like this that need to be explored further with the intent of state or federal funding.

G Sheldon then moves to the idea of a report in September with possible solutions proposed to be presented at fall town meeting

Jeff Gordon states that he feels that next steps need to be in our presentation at the next public forum. GSheldon then states that he can identify that we have pulled together regional partnerships along with state and federal funding goals. He will point out that we have a goal to create a 375th anniversary of town and our plan is to complete many big projects by that anniversary. He would like to create a survey over the summer for additional input from the townspeople he points out that when the Prescott committee put out a survey it revealed that 72% in town responded in favor of keeping Prescott as a town asset.

JPlatt suggests this session is more for brainstorming ideas that a true Q&A session as we do not have all the answers. JGordon states that having an uncontrolled conversation could get out of hand quickly.

G Sheldon brings the conversation back to structure of highlights to include infrastructure businesses,, hospitality, culture in history our town assets which include trails, farming, vistas equestrian and our lakes and rivers. some short conversation around whether or not arts and culture comes under the history category or history is its own category.

Jeff Gordon states that we have two issues the issues of today and how to preserve and expand our assets and then then discussing the solutions. it is important to discuss today's challenges and get people's ideas on future opportunities for infrastructure and economic development challenges.

Judy Anderson dates that both ways of approaching the presentation have their merits

JParker-Roach Brings up the idea of emphasizing of including diversity and acknowledging the changing demographics in our town with hopes of learning from each other and we need to explore ways to expand diversity and inclusion within the town. Judy Anderson states the town has not fully studied the new demographics of town but they are becoming evident when you go to group gatherings and finding ways to make those people feel welcome and included is important.

Ultimately committee agrees on format that Greg Sheldon runs through as a preview with above items delineated as important to be pointed out and as a way to direct the conversation without letting it get out of hand.

MElliott then clarifies with committee that her PA system will be needed and that she has discussed with the groton channel about how to hook into it and that we will need two mikes to be handed to people for questions.

**Agenda item 2-marketing discussion**

committee reviews Deb Buckley proposal for website development I'm branding.

Joni Parker-Roach asks if the videos are necessary and ahead of the time because we won't need them until we have branding in place. Jeff Gordon states that it's important to get the videos recorded and produced and branding will come later and be put added onto the videos before distribution.

Jeff Gordon then mentions that the invoice states it is to be paid within 15 days of proposal and wonders if we need to pay her all at once or in portions. Committee discusses and decides ultimately to pay full invoice prior to July 1st. Greg Sheldon points to a phrase in the proposal where Deb Buckley talks about quote tourism visitors UN quote and creating a destination within the region and statewide. He feels this is very important moving forward for grant applications to focus on.

Judy Anderson brings up an idea she had about parking in West Groton and perhaps there's potential for the town to buy the old Clover farms building and potentially a lot behind the park as well for additional parking.

Committee decides unanimously to accept proposals by AJ Pecukonis and Deb Buckley as written and to be paid prior to July 1st. AK Pecukonis to receive $6,505 and Deb Buckley to receive $8,000. JParker-Roach will send to Deb Buckley for signatures and Jeff Gordon will do the same for AJ Pecukonis and secure the funds from Mark Haddad.

Julie Platt left meeting at 4:30 PM

Committee discusses to change the date to change the time of the June 29th meeting to 2:00 to 4:00 PM committee agrees.

**Agenda item 4- other issues**

GSheldon states July meetings will be mostly for guests a committee will try to schedule a meeting in July with the pepperell economic development people who are hoping to meet with us. He also mentions a conversation with Richard Chilcoat regarding a discussion about the Earl Carter museum and invite him to discuss the museum in July. He also suggests we meet with Mark Haddad in July prior to our break.

G Sheldon then brings up the Diversity Task force is looking for ways to engage in the community and we should start looking at ways to engage with them perhaps bringing lectures to town. He also brings up the idea of an African American Film Festival. JParker-Roach brings up the idea of gallery openings to promote different artists from different backgrounds.

MElliott suggests that Gary Forseze of the Nashoba valley living publication should be in one of our July meetings as he intends to create his whole next issue about Groton. GSheldon will reach out to schedule. He shows committee some ideas of his for articles to be placed in this issue. Committee agrees to discuss further at subsequent meeting.

**Meeting adjourned at 4:55 PM**