**Destination Groton Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday July 13, 2022**

**6:30pm**

**First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

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

Attendees: Judy Anderson

**Guests:** Margaret Scarsdale Former Chair of Selectboard, Jennifer Gingras Town Planner, Steve Themelis Economic Development Committee member, Gary Forzese, Ann O’Connor Nashoba Valley Living Magazine

**Meeting opened by Greg Sheldon at 6:34pm**

**Agenda item 1- Approve Minutes July 6th- Motion to Approve minutes as amended made by Jeff Gordon and 2nd by Greg Sheldon, All approved Mairi Elliott, Julie Platt Joni Parker- Roach**

**Agenda Item 2- Updates: Earmark, Rep. Sena, Groton History Center, Ingigenous Indian (Nipmuck/Nashuway) tribute**

GSheldon opens with discussion on update from Chief of Staff at Sen. Cronin’s office and the reasoning behind the denial of Earmark request. He stated that he was told “the powers that be” could not be convinced of our need at that time. Sheldon states that we have lessons to learn in how to make a request, but we have created a solid relationship with Cronin’s office. He would like to carry on with that and points to our upcoming meeting with State Rep. Dan Sena being on next week’s agenda. He is important as he represents district 3A in Groton which houses Groton Hill Music.

Julie Platt asks of Sheldon if we are “on the radar” with the Senator’s office for future requests and Sheldon replies with a yes.

Sheldon moves on to discuss the Groton History center and the scheduling of a meeting with GHC and Richard Chilcoate potentially after our meeting with Rep. Sena. He states the GHC has a desire to expand their building and that area could potentially house the Earl Carter Collection.

Sheldon then brings up the subject of a monument to honor the Nipmuck. He relays that B. Pine and B. Easom have identified a spot at Badacook pond. He would like the committee to consider having a meeting with Pine and Easom and perhaps Lorena Novak of the United Native American Council to discuss all possible locations and to perhaps consider a more accessible spot suggesting that at the top of the Bates trail would be one suggestion. He believes we should open that conversation through Mark Haddad.

JGordon brings up that he just received the bill from GELD and will have it paid through MHaddad.

**Agenda Item 3- Pepperell Economic Officials**

6:50pm Margaret Scarsdale Chair of Selectboard, Jennifer Gingras Town Planner, Steve Themelis Econimoc Development Committee member.

GSheldon opens discussion with remarks on the GBA report and the main take away’s from it. He then brings up Route 119 and that Pepperell is a heavy user of it through our town. He then asks them to consider ways in which we can work together, alongside GHM, to capture the projected $21mil of economic impact for our respective towns. He states that Strategic partnerships are a goal for us and we as a committee would love to have them on the “team”. He states we are creating advisory groups to include regional partners. He believes that these partnerships in tandem with our developed relationships with Senator Cronin’s office and State Representatives will help to define Groton as a gateway to the North Central MA region. He states that partnerships will be key in moving forward with grant applications and Earmark requests. He tells them of our upcoming meeting with Rep. Sena.

JGingras mentions there will be a new round of funds to be requested in November. Sheldon goes on to add that we learned lessons in Earmark requests and that perhaps we asked for too high a number. She then goes on to suggest looking at the One Stop for grants. GSheldon tells her that we are aware of this and explains the process we have been through this year with speding funds for matching grants that we can apply for in next year’s round of applications. He then also tells her that one of our first meetings was with Keiko Orall of MOTT where we were introduced to the One Stop.

SThemelis then asks if Groton Hill Music is contributing to the town in anyway. MElliott tells him that they have recently agreed to a $2 ticket tax that will go directly to the town.

JGingras then brings up the Visitor’s Center website and tells us how well put together it is. We then explain that we are building our own website which will be more of a regional umbrella and that we plan to link the Visitor’s Center to it. She goes on to tell us that through the Rapid Local recovery program through the DHCD they created a report for Pepperell on how to best revitalize their downtown area. She mentions “Wayfinding” as being an integral part to that revitalization and having a website thathelps it’s visitors find their way to certain assets is key.

GSheldon then brings up the grant he is aware of that Pepperell recently won for $47k. MScarsdale states that was not the only grant they won for downtown revitalization.

SThemelis asks if we have contacted our Regional Planning agency which is through the Montachusett region. He strongly suggests we make contact and start utilizing them for assistance in planning and strategy. GSheldon states that he believes Groton’s Peter Cunningham is a representative for that agency.

JGordon brings up again that Groton Hill Music is the impetus for the GBA report and has evolved in to keeping the Character of the Town. Through doing so we have identified the challenges and the opportunities ahead of us.

JGingras brings up that they received a grant to create better parking and to widen sidewalks. She does mention that they do not have a hotel in town yet but they have developers looking at an area in their downtown to consider a housing project or small lodging facility.

MScarsdale states that a main focus of theirs is to encourage people to stay in town while they are there. GSheldon states he intends to work closely with GHM to encourage retention of GHM patrons.

SThemelis states he believes GHM must have done a traffic study or economic impact study but he has not made the right contact at GHM to access that information. GSheldon states GHM CEO is a cautious about predicting future economic impacts.

JPlatt tells the Pepperell attendees that she attended a meeting with the town and GHM where they addressed the traffic issue and pointed out that their study showed that traffic would be coming from many different roadways, not just 119.

JGingras then brings up that Lexington and Concord set up a program where they did tours between the two towns and that might be a possibility for us too. Pepperell is also looking at a building for a Community center. JPlatt states the Prescott is a great business incubator.

JParker-Roach brings up the idea of the Open Doors project that we could include Pepperell in along the Rail Trail.

GSheldon tells the group that our town has over 80 assets and we will be creating a strategic report for the Fall Town Meeting and a big piece of that will be about strategic regional partners.

JGingras states that Townsend has reached out via their new Town Organizer and would like to partner with them as well.

It was suggested that The Barn Door is thinking about creating a bus service to bring people from Groton to their location.

They go on to tell the committee of their local notable people though history including, Prudence Wright and the memorial by the covered bridge as well as stating that Samuel Prescott lived in Pepperell. They have created a map of the historical markers in town. She mentions Freedom’s Way as being a resource for national Heritage and historic resources.

When asked by JGordon how she got such engagement form her committees and selectboard members MScarsdale stated that she held a meeting with the heads of all committees and departments and started assigning ownership over specific items to bring to completion. She filled new committee’s as well. She stated that she pointed at a Master Plan from 50 years ago that had many of the same recommendations they had received recently and that action needed to be taken.

SThemelis states that the Old Mill in Pepperell holds much growth potential in Pepperell.

JGordon asks JGingris if she sees her role as Town Planner having an Economic Development role as well. She does not but has spoken with some regional partners that do have that position and they are considering bringing in Alan Manoian of Ayer to assist.

GSheldon mentions that we have asked the Planning Board to be a part of their Master Plan process. They agreed that is a good idea.

MScarsdale tells the committee that she is pleased with the partnership we are creating and the Regional Partnerships are weighted higher than individual Town projects through the One Stop grant program.

JGordon mentions that part of our initiative is to start encouraging town committees to engage in the process of enacting recommendations either made previously or in the future. MScarsdale replied that the “Summit” she held of her committee leaders was a huge spark for the town and its interest moving forward.

GSheldon mentioned that it is currently a challenge to convince the SelectBoard and Town to hire an Economic Development Specialist.

The guests and committee members thank each other for their time and look forward to a future working together.

**Item 4- Gary Forzese- Nashoba Valley Living**

GSheldon Welcomes Gary Forzese and his head writer Ann O’Connor to the table. He asks what drew him to this area to focus on as Mr. Forzese himself is from Andover.

Mr. Forzese describes always loving this area and that his now late brother attended Lawrence Academy. Ms. O’Connor tells us that she attended LA as well. He likes what our area has to offer the rest of the state and feels it is relevant to the tourism industry. He tells the committee that he delivers the published magazine to homes in the Nashoba Valley who make approximately over $200k/year. But that he also distributes at locations such as Shaw’s Town Hall, restaurants etc. and that his goal is to promote the beauty, art and culture of the area.

GSheldon comes prepared with a list of ideas for articles to be written in the Fall issue of the publication.

Mr. Forzese tells the committee that he has already planned a meeting and interview with Mark Haddad for an article and plans to do an article on the Groton FD as well as an article on Groton Hill Music.

JPlatt suggests an article on Marion Stoddard, MElliott and JParker-Roach agree.

GSheldon brings up the 375th anniversary in 8 years and suggests and article of our historical figures to include William Prescott, Boutwell and Marion Stoddard as snap shots through time.

GForzese states that may be too many articles or too much to put in to one issue. He then goes on to tell us that he would like to put Groton on the cover of the magazine but coming up with a good vertical shot would be helpful.

He tells us that he recently had a meeting with Ayer and they too discussed their history. Staying current and what is next for Groton feels right for this issue. He would like to have an article about “What’s going on in Groton”

JPlatt suggests that the Groton Inn is a great Place to start. JParker-Roach adds that if that is done they could include the artists through history from now to current along with gallery happenings like Artist Receptions and Winterfest.

GSheldon states the Fall is a timely release for the issue as GHM will be opening in September. GForzese states it may be issued later than September or October.

Ann O’Connor states that she would like to have some action items for each article written and that she is the primary writer and researcher of articles.

JGordon emphasizes that an article on the Inn could incorporate History, arts and the present happenings in town.

Judy Anderson suggest writing something about the movies that have been made in town over the past years.

GForzese asks the committee if they have an advertising budget for this as having this many more articles will take away from some of the advertising space.

JGordon asks how many advertisers he generally has, and offers to connect him with business owners through the GBA for this issue.

MElliott asks if he would prefer to have a list of people or to be put in contact with people for advertising and he would prefer to be put in contact with people willing to place ads.

GSheldon asks when drafts need to be submitted by and GForzese replies with September 1. AO’Connor however reminds Mr. Sheldon that she is the writer and we will not be submitting written articles.

JPlatt asks AO’Connor what sticks out to her to write about. She agrees that Marion Stoddard is a good option and that Groton Hill Music makes the most sense.

GSheldon- emphasizes that the types of articles we would like are Arts/Culture, History and Marion Stoddard. He also suggests talking with the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce for advertisers.

MElliott asks is they have a staff photographer or if we need to/can submit our own photos.

Group has a discussion on whether Gibbet Hill or Groton Hill Music will be placed on the cover.

JPlatt states thet GHM will have their own photos for submission.

GSheldon confirms that the articles will have photos as well. And yes, they will so many options for photos available.

Mr. Forzese and Ann O’Connor leave at 9pm.

**Agenda Item 5- Other issues**

GSheldon brings up the recent opening of the Town Warrant and asks the committee if we should draft one. MElliott states that we are not yet in a position to go to the town for more funding and it is too early. JPlatt and JParker-Roach agree.

Sheldon them brings up that CPC funds will be available in December.

Judy Anderson suggests asking Bruce Easom for guidance. GSheldon thinks it would be best to go through MHaddad to bring in people for help with grant writing.

GSheldon them moves to some housekeeping on the current webpage. He ask that the forum letter be removed and that we submit the Groton Channel coverage of the last forum to the webpage. He would also like to have the signed cover letter to selectboard from the contributors to the GBA report posted. MElliott will contact town IT and have these items taken care of.

JGorodn asks if we should send emails with finings to forum attendees. GSheldon would like to brief MHaddad before we do that.

JPlatt asks if it is yet time to bring in Tom Delaney for the traffic and parking priorities that have come to the top through the forums.

GSheldon again believes it best to meet with MHaddad and then have him help us coordinate different meetings.

Judy Anderson believes we need to bring in the Montachusett council quickly to help strategize on grant writing and that it would be helpful to have Mark on board with that soon. She suggests it may not be Takashi’s area of expertise. She also states that Mark may be loosing Dawn Dunbar from his office if she is appointed as Town Clerk.

JPlatt goes back to Tom Delaney and wants it to become a priority to have a conversation with him.

GSheldon feels if we lay out to MHaddad what we have discovered that he in turn can delegate tasks to town officials like Mr. Delaney.

JParker- Roach then hands out an email to be read by committee later from Lauren Hanson and then reads a letter about funding for the arts for consideration.

**Motion to adjourn at 9:28pm made by Julie Platt and 2nd by Joni Parker-Roach**

**All approved- MElliott, JGordon and GSheldon**