**Destination Groton Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday July 27, 2022**

**2pm via Zoom**

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

**Guests: Mark Haddad and Dawn Dunbar**

**Agenda Item 2-Meet with Town Manager Mark Haddad**

Greg Sheldon opens meeting at 2:03pm

Welcomes Mr. Haddad and Ms. Dunbar and begins to update them on committee activities

**Committee activity update:**

* DGC has met weekly since January 12, 2022 (26)
* Participated in MASB Association Webinar (One Stop)
* Letters of support to CPC: Groton Conservation Trust (Bates), Groton Trails (Nashua Riverwalk, Select Board Chair (Indigenous Indian site/monument)
* Joint meeting with Town Planning Board
* Joint meeting with Groton Cable Advisory Committee
* Sheila Harrington and Keiko Oral, Director Mass Office of Travel and Tourism
* Visited Earl Carter exhibit
* Senator John Cronin (earmark)
* State Rep. Dan Sena
* Pepperell Economic and Planning Officials
* Groton Hill Music site tour with Select Board Chair John Reilly
* Conducted three Public Forums (Findings now posted on Town DGC website)
* Engaged the professional services of a Marketing Specialist and Videographer

After a brief update on each of these GSheldon brings up the Nipmuck Monument that he has learned that members of the Select Board are proposing and asks if a location has been identified. MHaddad states that they have identified a location near Baddacook Pond and will be submitting a formal proposal soon. Sheldon mentions that as a committee we have discussed this idea and have some location ideas in mind as well. He would like to reach out to open a discussion. MHaddad recommends reaching out to Becky Pine directly.

GSheldon then moves to asking Mr. Haddad about the Master Plan process and what is happening thus far. MHaddad states that Takashi Tada is working on the RFP to hire the consultant and that will go out in August.

GSheldon then goes back to the committee’s meeting with the Groton Channel and that we would love to work with him to help save this asset to the Town.

Sheldon then tells Mr. Haddad in more depth about the committee’s meeting with Keiko Orall and mentions that a great relationship was forged but she may not be in that office after November elections. However, we will continue to pursue the MOTT matching grant. He then discusses the matching grant that we had been working on spending funds for and it is confirmed with Dawn Dunbar that the committee did spend the $15k required for us to apply for the MOTT grant. He states that we learned a lot in the Earmark request process and that part of our denial was related to the fact that we requested from a Junior member of the state Senate. But we have made in roads with other State officials as well.

Sheldon then tells MHaddad of the visit he and JGordon took to Earl Carter’s collection and emphasized its importance to the town and the need to find a place to house it in the future.

Sheldon the discusses the meeting with Representative Sena who represents the district in Groton that houses Groton Hill Music. He states it was a good meeting and we believe he will be helpful in the future.

He then tells of the meeting with the Pepperell town officials and that we learned much from them and we look forward to creating a great regional partnership with them and that will be helpful for future grant applications.

He then goes over the 3 Public forums that were held and the results are now posted on the Committee’s webpage on the Town site as compiled by Joni Parker-Roach. He tells Mr. Haddad that we had approximately 100 attendees over the course of three and had great community engagement. The Groton channel video recording is also posted on our web page. MHaddad asks if we have any data on traffic on that site. Committee states that we believe Mike Chaisson would have that information.

Sheldon then tells Haddad that we were able to engage a web developer and videographer as part of the above mentioned budget expenditures for matching grants.

GSheldon then moves into the outline for the Committee’s plans over the next six months.

**Committee plans for next six months:**

* Arrange GHM tour for St. Rep Sena and Town Manager Haddad? (August)
* Joint meeting with Groton History Center to discuss mission and potential Earl Carter wing
* Launch Destination Groton website (September)
* Establish Town Master Events Calendar (Visitor Center)
* Discuss: Brief Select Board on work to date and next six months (September)
* Discuss: Town Warrant for fall Town Meeting? (October)
* Discuss: DGC briefing at fall Town Meeting (October)
* Discuss: potential Community Preservation Committee applications (December)
* Discuss: Destination Groton Summit with Town Committees and key Town employees (October)
* Mail Town Survey (September)
* Nashoba Valley Living issue dedicated to Groton (fall/winter)
* Organize a series of Working Groups: Infrastructure; Development; Finance; Marketing; Community, etc. (September)
* Establish a Regional Partners Group (North Central Mass, Montachusett Regional, NVCC)
* Assist Planning Board with Town Master Plan Update
* Research and produce a ten-year Destination Groton Strategic Blueprint (fall/winter)

GSheldon mentions a future visit to GHM with Representative Sena and his legislative Aide and asks Mr. Haddad if he would like to come along. MHaddad states that he and Dawn had recently toured with the Finance Committee but he would like to meet Rep. Sena and will be happy to join us for another tour. Mr. Haddad stated that the facility was extraordinary and that they are going before the Select Board to request their liquor license on 8/8/22.

GSheldon emphasizes the committee’s desire to help facilitate an Earl Carter Collection Museum. He tells him of our upcoming meeting on 8/5 with the Groton History center and that we hope to connect with the History center on a shared goal of facilitating the carter Collection. He mentions that we may invite the selectboard to view the collection to bring their attention to it’s size and gravity.

He states the committees intention to have some basic website functionality by September and we hope to include a community wide events calendar. That is being worked on for the Visitor’s center by David Wang of Groton School.

He asks Mr. Haddad if briefing the Select Board on our activity would be helpful at this point. Mr. Haddad agrees that it would and suggests arranging for us to be on the agenda sometime in September. He believes the 9th of the 26th would be good days for this.

GSheldon that inquires about the opening of the town warrant and if we should make a placeholder even though we do not have anything we are asking for at this point. Mr. Haddad does not think to be wise at this time. Sheldon asks that if Mr. Haddad feels that the town wants/needs to hear from us at Town meeting. Mr Haddad suggests that without a specific article the Moderator does not like open ended warrant items. He states we could offer support to planning board at town meeting of the Master plan process and that that he believes pursuit of CPA funding would be our best avenue at this time for town funding. Dawn Dunbar suggests getting in touch with Sami for eligible funding from CPC. Mr. Haddad states that we would have a better reach to the town through updating the Select Board at their meeting. More people watch that than come to town meeting. GSheldon continues that we want to do our best in outreach to the community as there is resistance and we want to be as transparent as possible through the process. He states that some of the questions we receive are along the lines of “what is our return n investment?” and he would like and opportunity to address that to the community in the best way possible.

Next discussion is on the idea of a town wide “summit” of the committee heads. He tells Mr. Haddad this was something that Margaret Scarsdale headed up when she was Select Board Chair in Pepperell to get her town truly engaged in the redevelopment process. She related to us that this made all the difference in going from ideas to actions. Sheldon goes on to lay out that the idea would be to get everyone one the same page and organize within working groups under categories such as infrastructure, development, finance, marketing and community. He states that our time horizon is about 8-10 years with the 375th anniversary as a goal post to have most projects done by.

MHaddad believes a summit is an excellent idea and he recommends organizing this in November. Sheldon then asks Haddad to be the Moderator of the group, Haddad then suggest Dawn Dunbar to do it. This will be further discussed. Haddad states this would be very helpful in the master planning process as well and the planning board should be very involved as well.

Sheldon then tells MHaddad of our plan to send a survey out to the town through GELD- Haddad agrees to the idea.

Sheldon then tells Mr. Haddad of our upcoming issue in Nashoba Living Magazine and mentions that there is an intention to have Mr. Haddad himself interviewed. Haddad confirms. Sheldon states this will be a timely issue as it will coincide with the fall opening of GHM.

Sheldon then states our biggest challenge in the next 6 months is grant writing and identifying the grants to apply for by 2023 and to have identified project for ARPA funds. MHaddad states that all but 250k of $3mil ARPA funds have been allocated.

MHaddad asks what the committees thoughts are on the Economic developer position for the town. JGordon replies with “the sooner the better” as we are operating as such for now. GSheldon states that many of the towns the GBA studied and that we are engaging with now have this position in place. MHaddad states that the position would not be able to be funded until FY 2024 and asks for our help in selling the idea to town officials.

JGordon states that is our meeting with Pepperell we discovered that they have done what we are doing now and that they have an economic developer because all town officials were on board especially after the town wide summit to create the position. MHaddad states we should learn from what they did and repeat it. JGordon emphasizes that at the time it was The Chair of Select Board that drove it through and he wonders how on board our Select board is with the idea of the position. GSheldon states we would like to work with Takashi and the Planning board to help convince of the need for the position.

Sheldon then points to the study provided in 2017 to the Select Board regarding the economic impact of GHM over it’s first 3 years and the expected $21mil in impact. He states we plan to create a strategic plan to be presented at either Fall or Spring Town meetings.

MHaddad goes over his takeaways from the meeting:

He will get us on the agenda with the Select Board

He will reach out to planning board regarding Summit and working together with us.

He will visit GHM with Rep. Sena

He will start organizing around Summit idea.

MHaddad and DDunbar leave at 1:58pm

**Marketing plan-**

Deb Buckley was unable to attend today but sent questionnaire for us to fill out and send back to her prior to next meeting with her.

Gsheldon asks if we need to come up with a logo now? MElliott points to previous discussion with Ms. Buckley about her process in that and that we should let her lead us through that process.

JPlatt suggest August meetings with DBuckley should be via zoom and held to 1 hour. Sheldon states we may have other agenda items to attend to.

Next meeting to be at Town Hall at 4pm to meet with Groton History Center and then go for a tour.

**Motion to approve minutes: Motion to approve minutes from 7/19/22 made by Julie Platt and 2nd by Jeff Gordon. All approved**

**Meeting adjourned at 3:14pm**