**Destination Groton Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday August 5, 2022**

**First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

**2pm**

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

**Guests: Chip Detwiller, Michelle Collette, Richard Chilcoat, Beverly Smith**

**Meeting opened at 2:15pm**

**Agenda Item 1- Approve minutes from 7/19/22**

GSheldon points out that in last section it should state $350,000 not $350mil dollar grant received by Littleton.

Motion: Joni Parker-Roach makes a motion to approve minutes from 7/19 as amended. Jeff Gordon 2nd’s. All approve.

**Agenda Item 2- Marketing plan**

GSheldon brings up that JPlatt sent links to the committee for MA Cultural Council. He asks committee to study it and become familiar with what is there. He shows an example of a calendar they have on the site and emphasizes the desire to have something similar on our website.

MElliott reminds that a calendar is about to be released to the Visitor Center website that can be linked to our website. GSheldon suggests we ask Julie if there will be oversight once events have been submitted. He also would like to know when it will be live on GVC site.

JParker-Roach brings up an email she received from MA Creative and she recommends we register, as there is much information to be learned about grants and they are having a webinar.

GSheldon ties in advisory groups and states that a main objective for them will be to identify grant money, in addition to educating the public on objectives.

JParker-Roach states that Deb Buckley could not make today’s meeting but we are set up for next Wednesday from 9:30-11:30 and then the following Tuesday and subsequent Tuesday’s for August from 9:30-10:30. She discusses the “playbook” with the committee and that Deb intends to break out homework-sized pieces for us over the coming weeks, in order for us to develop our brand and website structure.

GSheldon Asks JGordon where AJ Pecukonis is at in his video shoots. JGordon states that they are preparing to record Town officials and have done several businesses already. He reminds us that GBA members are getting $50 off of the $300 cost to have a video made. He also mentions that the Groton Inn is on the docket to be done soon. MElliott suggests he gets a shot of the NOA gallery while they are there, for our vertical videos.

GSheldon states that it would be nice to have some videos to present at the Select Board meeting. JGordon asks which aspect is best to promote in that venue. Trails Committee? Groton History Center and Josh Vollmar? JParker-Roach adds that the Inn would be a good one, as well. The committee agrees on the Planning Board being highlighted, as well as the Town Manager.

**Other Issues-**

GSheldon brings up that the Historic Commission was notified that Groton Hill intends to demolish the Prescott House currently located on their property. He states that his impression from watching the meeting was that the Historic Commission intends to push back and invoke an 18-month delay and wants a public hearing. He wonders if the committee should take a public stance. And if so, what is that stance.

MElliott states that we should err on the side of preservation, but not take a public stance one way or the other. Our goal should be to provide solutions for many problems, one of which could be finding a home for the Earl Carter collection in the Prescott House.

JGordon states the building will need to be moved and it is falling down. He is unsure if there is enough there to preserve, but he is more interested in collaborating with the Town than GHM.

JParker-Roach states she is all for preserving, but that this is not our fight. Tourism income is more important and if the delay happens, we have time to come up with solutions. She feels we should fine-tune our charter to avoid public side taking. She states we can individually have our opinions and be in support or against something, but not as a committee.

MElliott agrees that we should wait to see what Historic Commission does, and if it gets delayed, then we can find a way to help.

GSheldon states he went back through Historic Commission minutes and found that it was agreed that if the Bates building was demolished, the Prescott would be preserved. He suggests that a future site tour could/should include this building. He also states there could be a public hearing on the issue and he recommends we as citizens support the Historic Commission in the preservation of this very important building in our history.

He states that Rep. Sena is scheduled for a tour now on Sept. 1 at 1 pm. He asks if we should send a bouquet to Lisa for her opening day on 8/27 or bring one on this day. It is decided that JParker-Roach will order and send a bouquet from Lavender’s on 8/27.

There is discussion on who else to invite. Suggested - Deb Busser, Representative Sena, Trahan. We will have a subsequent tour with the Speaker of the House and Michael Bobbitt of MA Cultural Council, as well as Senato Cronin. The Pepperell town officials were suggested by JGordon and it is decided that GSheldon will reach out to the Pepperell Town planner, Jennifer Gingras.

**Agenda Item 3 - Advisory groups**

JParker-Roach states she would like Arts & Culture to have its own advisory group. She feels existing galleries need their own representation. GSheldon feels the advisory group entitled Community would cover that and it does not need an independent advisory group.

GSheldon runs through each group and outlines their purpose and lays out Lists of potential names.

1) **Infrastructure Advisory Group**

 Traffic volume, noise, congestion, speed, rotary

 Parking on street, trail sites, structured garage

 Sidewalks in Town Center area

 Signage directional, historic homes and sites

 Transportation - Shuttle bus to Ayer and Lowell train stations, van and/or bicycles to attractions and trails

 Powerlines buried on Main Street (Old Ayer Road – Champney Street)

 Monuments, historic statues, observation sites

 Restrooms in Town Center, along Rail Trails

 Rest area benches, tables, educational plaques in Town and on trails

Discuss potential members: +/- others?

 Tom Delany, DPW

 Takashi Tada, Town Planner

 Kevin Kelly, GELD

 Steve Legge, Trails Committee

 Russ Burke, Planning Board

 Bob Pine, Conservation Trust

 Bruce Easom, Conservation Committee

 Halsey Platt, Platt Builders

 Peter Cunningham, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission

 Rob Moore, Lawrence Academy

MElliott will reach out to Groton School for a member to represent them on this advisory. She asks if Bonnie Biocchi is no longer available and Sheldon informs that she seems to have moved away.

**2) Commercial/Nonprofit Advisory Group**

JParker-Roach asks if West Groton, CVS area, Deluxe are included in this section as areas of potential development. GSheldon will add them to the description of the group.

 Development targets small retail stores, hospitality, Arts/Culture

 Town Center, Main Street, Hollis Street, and Station Avenue

 Four Corners potential retail and commercial development - Funding source: private development

- Estimated cost: ?

- Timeline: 1-10 years

- Member lead: Jeff and Mairi

- Current Task: Inventory commercial spaces (Jeff/Mairi)

- Identify list of potential stores (Joni/Julie)

- For discussion, potential members:

 Mark Haddad, Town Manager

 Scott Wilson, Planning Board

 Peter Benedict, Historic District Commission

 Art Prest

 John Amaral, Omni Properties

 Dan McElroy, Station House Restaurant

 Bob Collins, Attorney

 Steve Lane, Prescott Community Center

 Jack Petropoulos, Groton Matters

 Chip Detwiller, Lexvest

 ? , Arts Nashoba

 ? Groton Business Association

 Others? +/-

**3) Community Events Advisory Group**

 Existing events: Calendar/inventory and promote in Marketing campaign

 Identify potential: new Town events, celebrations, commemorations

- Funding source: Town, nonprofit, foundation, private

- Estimated cost: ?

- Timeline: 1-8 years (375th anniversary)

- Member lead: Joni and Mairi

- For discussion potential Advisory Group members:

 Don Black, Commemorations and Celebration Committee

 ? Local Cultural Council

 Raquel Majeski, Diversity Task Force

 ? Groton History Center

 Joshua Vollmar, Groton Historical Commission

 John Smigelski, Agricultural Committee

 Shawn Campbell, Country Club

 Gail Chalmers, West Groton

 Mary Jennings, Prescott Community Center

 Tricia Tompkins, Groton Inn

 Visitor Center

 Arts Nashoba

 Groton Nonprofit Council, etc.

 Lisa Fiorentino, Groton Hill Music

JParker-Roach suggests Patrick Parker-Roach, committee agrees to add. More discussion on having an independent Arts and Culture Advisory Committee. She would like to add Carol Canner and several others from the art community. GSheldon suggests Joni create a separate arts and culture sub-committee.

**4) Marketing Advisory Group**

 Website: Branding/Theme

 Press relations and coverage

 Multi-media and social media campaign

 Town map, brochure of five National Historic Sites, events calendar

 Promotional videos: people/places/businesses/non-profits/Town committees

 Destination themes: weddings/recreation/history/events/dining/arts/trails

 Targeted emails

 Groton Cable Show

 Boston TV coverage: Chronicle, New England Living, NECN, etc.

 Articles in local/regional/Boston publications

- Funding source: MA Office of Travel and Tourism grant

- Estimated cost: $250,000 + $250,000 match

- Timeline: 1-3 years

- Member lead: Mairi and Joni

Advisory Group potential partners:

 Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce

 Groton Business Association

 Historical Commission

 History Center

 Nonprofit organizations

 Town Library

 Groton Hill Music

 Other major regional venues

 Other individuals?

Committee members agreed that AJ Pecukonis, Deb Buckley, and Steve Harrington should be added to the list.

**5) Finance Sub-Committee**

 Nearly every major initiative will need to be financed at some level

 Working with our local, state and federal elected officials and staff is critical

 Identifying government and private grant opportunities, submitting applications

and securing funding will determine our outcomes.

 Major grant sources include: MA Office of Travel and Tourism, MA Cultural

Council, MassWorks, MA Recreational Trails, Freedom’s Way, and many others.

- Funding source: local, state, federal and private sector and foundation grants

- Estimated cost: $10,000,000

- Timeline: 1-10 years

- Member lead: Greg, Joni, Julie

- Current Task: begin meetings with government officials to identify support for short

and long term funding initiatives.

- Advisory Group potential partners:

 Bud Robertson, Finance Committee

 David Manugian, Capital Planning Advisory Group

**6. Regional Partners Advisory Group**

 Groton is the Gateway to North Central Massachusetts

 Working with regional partners will benefit all in the region

- Advisory Group potential partners:

 Jennifer Gingras, Pepperell Town Planner

 Alan Manoian, Ayer, Director of Economic Development

 Melissa Fetterhoff, President, Nashoba Valley CC

 Johnny Appleseed Tourism

 Major regional corporations, foundations, non-profits, and venues

 Local, State, Federal elected officials (Rep Sena, Sen Cronin, Cong. Trahan)

**Agenda Item 4- Nashoba Valley Living update-** Held until next meeting due to time.

**Agenda Item 5- Groton History Center Discussion 4pm**

Richard Chilcoat, Michelle Collette and Beverly Smith

GSheldon opens discussion with apprising GHC of why our committee was formed and explains that we have been appointed to promote the town. He states there is some sentiment out there that there is concern for adding traffic to an already congested at times Town center. He describes that we would like to merely capture the traffic that is already here and will be here with GHM opening, as well as the eventual suburban sprawl.

MCollette adds that she feels traffic can be managed. GSheldon then points to the number of studies that have been done that point to traffic being a regional challenge. MCollette agrees and that this can be addressed with more than just funding from Groton.

GSheldon believes traffic can be solved regionally while we help people discover that Groton is the Gateway to the Region.

MCollette tells the committee about the GHC’s endowment campaign and that they are focusing and aware that as far as regional history, the public sentiment is Concord and Lexington and they intend to add Groton to that list.

GSheldon asks for clarity on their endowment efforts and what they are fund raising for. He brings up Earl Carter and a potential museum and states there are many historical sites in town that could house it, but asks the GHC if they want to house the collection on site.

MColeltte shares that one of their board members had reached out to Earl Carter prior to COVID and conversations had been started. They have done a feasibility study on the carriage house on their property for expansion and were given a proposal prior to COVID. This project of expanding the carriage house will be paid for by endowment funds. In addition to that, they intend to extend their hours and hire a full-time employee.

Cip Detwiller asks if the barn is big enough to hold the collection. The answer is no, as that needs to hold the antique vehicles.

As Beverly Smith and Richard Chilcoat join the meeting, GSheldon reiterates our mission and that we as a committee want to help the History Center in its endeavors. He mentions that there is a projected $21million of venue increase potential with Groton Hill Music coming, and that he feels history is one of our main products. He would like to help the GHC capture that income. He lays out that we have a goal of our 375th anniversary in mind for a “completion” date and would love to partner with GHC as history plays a key role in our town. He then talks about what we have in town for nationally registered historic places, and a conversation is had about creating a National Register tour for downtown buildings. GSheldon tells the GHC that our vision is widespread and long term. We have a broad outlook on what can be done not just within Groton, but for the region.

He then turns to the Earl Carter collection and states that this is a project that has some urgency involved and that we would like to help facilitate in any way we can.

Richard Chilcoat tells the DGC that he had met with Mr. Carter the day before and had a very good meeting. He emphasized the importance of the collection and how “blown away” he was by it. He also talks about how large the collection is (including a cannon) and how it may be difficult to house it all.

JGordon asks how high a priority it is for the collection to be housed at the GHC, and if it was, would it be promoted as a tourist attraction.

RChilcoat replies that generally unless they have a special event, they do not promote their collections as attractions.

JGordon states that we would like to cooperate with the GHC to find a home for the collection. GSheldon states that he would like to showcase the Carter legacy and asks if there is any room if the carriage house expansion is completed.

Beverly Smith states that the funds from endowment are primarily for extending hours and expanding their existing collections.

RChilcoat says that the key is to preserve the Carter collection in some way. Beverly Smith agrees that we all have the same goal to preserve the collection, but wonders about how we get there from a funding and location standpoint.

GSheldon points back to the Station Ave. overlay plan, done many years ago, and that it was an amazing blueprint for what could be a future downtown Groton. He also states that not much has been done, based on the plans. MCollette reminds him that the Station House, GELD building and Boynton Meadows were all a part of that vision. She also states that Prescott was in that vision, as well.

GSheldon states he is referring more to small retail shops. He is also thinking of sites for Earl Carter in satellite locations from the GHC. He includes the Bank of America building and RiverCourt as potential sites. He tells the GHC that he would like to help them with their endowment efforts.

RChilcoat states that they do not have much to offer in terms of space for the collection, as well as personnel to handle the additional project. He states that our suggestions are not speedy and that we should consider where the collection can be stored.

Chip Detwiller adds that Mr. Carter is very concerned about where his collection is to be housed and if it will be full time curated or not. He tells the committee that he has looked into the BOA building and has spoken with the representatives and has been told that if the ATM window can stay the BOA building is a viable option.

GSheldon emphasizes that this is Mr. Carter’s lifelong collection and showing him that progress is being made is a priority to him. RChilcoat agrees that honoring his wishes is very important.

Chip Detwiller suggests that the cost of the BOA building could be close to $1.1Million and the cost to convert the window is $200k.

MCollette states that Mr. Carter was once interested in the old GELD garages and wonders if Mr. McElroy would have a conversation with him.

RChilcoat states that their collection has many items they can’t display and more space would be wonderful for them, when they can expand through endowment funding.

GSheldon tells them that we have created relationships with State Representatives and Senators. He states we have a tour of GHM on Sept. 1 with State Rep. Sena and that we have an extra spot to invite a guest. We would love to extend to GHC. RChilcoat would love to attend. Sheldon also states we are working on making a connection with Trahan and the Speaker of the House.

Sheldon states that these connections are a way for us to find funding for this project. He then asks what their strategy was with their endowment. Beverly Smith replies that they have a goal of first getting to $1million. She states that by August they may have $150k more and can reasonably get to another $250k. That will allow them to spend about $41k on a salaried position. Additionally, they are considering renting the space on the first floor. MCollette adds that they started their campaign in 2019 and invested through connections made through the Community Foundation of North Central. She states they very securely invested and had great private contributions from community members.

GSheldon feels that we can work together to solve the problem of the Earl Carter collection and we can bring our energy to the negotiating table. He states we are working on a marketing campaign and wonders if they would like to be included in that as we move forward.

The GHC agrees to partner in marketing.

RChilcoat states that there is a new board since discussions were last had about the Carter collection and they may be more willing to engage. Beverly Smith states the board is filled with visionaries.

JGordon asks how we can best help to move this along.

RChilcoat states he will speak with his Board in the near future and discuss with them their desire to spearhead the Carter Collection Project. BSmith states there are many people to engage with on this issue who have shown interest or who have appropriately sized properties. MCollette adds that it would be worthwhile to approach Mr. McElroy about his available space on Station Ave.

Chip Detwiller asks if he can start further conversations with Bank of America to get more info on purchasing or renting the building. – Committee agrees it doesn’t hurt to have information.

GSheldon suggests that if the GHC Board is agreeable, we should create an independent advisory group to address the collection and its home.

MElliott suggests the idea of breaking up the collection to house smaller parts of it in different locations across town to include West Groton on any future history tour, with some of the collection at RiverCourt, some at BOA or Station Ave, some at GHC and perhaps some in different galleries at LA and Groton School. Committee agrees there is room for discussion around that in the future.

MCollette suggests that we participate in the Planning Board’s Master plan process and that a good Master Plan is a grassroots effort.

She then shares that the Groton COA has received 2,000 COVID tests to distribute townwide and offers them to members present.

Meeting is adjourned at 5:20pm.