**Meeting Minutes - Destination Groton Committee (DGC) Meeting**

**Meeting Date:** Mar 12, 2025

**Attendees:**

* **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker-Roach, Brian Bolton
* **Sub-Committee member:** Karen Tucker-Barisano

**Meeting Summary:** The meeting focused on finalizing and aligning various planning and community initiatives, including finalizing participants for the March 21 focus group on Town Center traffic issues, coordinating upcoming grant applications and funding opportunities, and strategizing the committee's support and role in the town's 250th-anniversary events. The group discussed logistics and representation for the focus group session with Stantec, ensuring key stakeholders from businesses, residents, and organizations were invited. Additional focus was given to preparing for the One Stop RDF site preparation grant, clarifying what site preparation entails, and setting a schedule to complete the application. The meeting also reviewed opportunities for the $2 million marketing and programming grant tied to the 250th anniversary, including ways to support town events through marketing. Discussions included potential budget allocations, collaborations with other committees, and brainstorming of new event ideas that would qualify under the grant guidelines. The committee emphasized the importance of coordination across committees and agencies, community engagement, and thoughtful planning to ensure alignment with broader town goals.

**Key Takeaways**

1. **Focus Group Planning for Town Center Traffic Issues**

* **March 21 focus group** confirmed, with **two sessions**: 9:00 AM (government committees and town departments) and 10:00 AM (residents, businesses, organizations).
* A **list of 15-20 targeted participants** was finalized, focusing on businesses and residents directly impacted by Main Street and surrounding areas.
* **Committee members assigned to reach out** to specific businesses and individuals to confirm participation.
* An **email invitation followed by phone call confirmation** was agreed upon as the communication strategy.

1. **Rural Development Fund (RDF) Site Preparation Grant**

* The **One Stop grant application due June 5** was discussed; a **schedule to draft and review the application** will be created.
* Clarification needed on the definition of "site preparation," including **zoning analysis, infrastructure, and capacity studies**.
* Coordination with town officials and consultants will be required to define the scope of work for the grant application.

1. **250th Anniversary Marketing and Programming Grant**

* Opportunity to apply for part of a **$2 million state grant (ranging from $5,000 to $100,000 per project)**, focused on **marketing and programming** for the 250th anniversary.
* **Support for town-organized events**, with a suggested **split budget** (e.g., $40,000 total, $20,000 supporting town events, $20,000 for Destination Groton initiatives).
* Discussion on acceptable expenses under the grant, including **programming and marketing**, but excluding permanent installations like plaques and signs.
* Need for a **detailed line-item budget**, emphasizing marketing efforts for tourism and attracting visitors from 50+ miles away.
* Agreement to **coordinate with the 250th Committee** to align funding proposals and event support.

1. **Event Planning and Marketing Coordination**

* Discussion on the importance of **coordinating with the Cultural District Committee** and other groups to align on event timing and marketing.
* Agreement to **share meeting minutes and updates** across committees to improve alignment and communication.
* **Clarification of roles** in supporting events and promoting Groton as a destination.

1. **Tourism and Marketing Program Opportunities**

* Review of **creative marketing ideas** eligible for grant funding, including historical lectures, cultural programming, and destination promotion.
* Potential use of **professional media production (e.g., video, social media campaigns)** to highlight Groton’s cultural and historical assets.
* Committee noted the importance of **marketing beyond local audiences to drive regional and out-of-state tourism**.

**Action Items**

* **Send email invitations to focus group participants**, followed by phone calls to confirm attendance.
* **Finalize and submit the list of invitees by end of week**.
* **Create and circulate a schedule for writing the One Stop RDF site preparation grant application**, with deadlines for draft reviews and final submission.
* **Clarify the definition of site preparation** with town officials and consultants (e.g., zoning, infrastructure, capacity).
* **Coordinate a meeting with Don Black and Connie Sartini** to discuss collaborative use of marketing funds for 250th events.
* **Reach out to the Groton Herald** to update links in submitted press releases.
* **Prepare a draft of website content for the audio tour** by next week.
* **Create a poster and supporting materials for the state tourism conference**.
* **Brainstorm potential additional events or programs for 250th marketing grant** to be included in the application.
* **Coordinate with Cultural District Committee** (Julie and Judy) to align planning efforts and event calendars.