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

**Meeting Date:** Mar 21, 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 reviewing recent focus group feedback regarding Town Center traffic planning, evaluating the proposal submitted in response to the Rural Development Fund (RDF) RFP, and advance preparations for the upcoming April 6th 250th-anniversary event. Additional agenda items included exploring updates to the MOTT (Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism) grant application for potential funding support of commemorative programming and event marketing, selecting a winner from business cards collected at the State Tourism Conference, and expanding Destination Groton’s outreach strategy. Attendees also discussed follow-up marketing tactics for the anniversary event, including printed materials, digital communications, social media, and media coverage. The meeting served as a strategic alignment session for various tourism, grant, and outreach initiatives, with emphasis on maintaining momentum across all fronts while managing committee capacity and deadlines.

**Key Takeaways**

1. **Focus Group Feedback**

* Two well-attended focus groups were held with town officials, residents, and business representatives to gather input on traffic concerns and future downtown development.
* The sessions revealed differing priorities between technical town staff and community members regarding infrastructure innovations.
* Stantec will integrate feedback from both sessions into their forthcoming vision plan for a 10-year development outlook.

1. **RDF Consultant Selection**

* Only one proposal was received in response to the RDF RFP—from a well-regarded consultant with prior experience in Groton.
* The committee reviewed the submission and voted to move forward with that consultant, pending a follow-up meeting/interview.
* Coordination with the selected vendor is essential to meet key deadlines, including a status update to Rural Development on April 9 and the full application submission by June 4.

1. **MOTT Grant Strategy**

* The committee debated whether to re-use and revise last year’s MOTT grant application, which focused on promoting town events through marketing support.
* Questions arose regarding eligible expenses—specifically around programming vs. marketing—and how funding could be applied to fireworks, musical acts, or print advertising.
* The group agreed to reach out to Don Black to confirm the list of events he is organizing and what level of financial support he would welcome from Destination Groton.

1. **April 6 Event Marketing & Outreach**

* Current RSVPs total approximately 125; the target is to fill 300 seats, requiring aggressive marketing in the final two weeks.
* The committee committed to identifying and engaging with at least two dozen mailing lists (schools, town groups, arts orgs, etc.) to promote the event.
* Flyer distribution will extend to Main Street businesses, Mill Run Plaza, nearby libraries, and Shaw’s bulletin boards.
* Outreach is being expanded to potential guest musicians, including a local school choir.

1. **State Tourism Conference Follow-up**

* Committee members reflected positively on their attendance at the conference and the valuable connections made with stakeholders from media, tourism, and cultural institutions.
* The group selected a raffle winner from a random business card drawing—Dana Honor from Visit New England—to receive a weekend in Groton, with plans for photo ops and social media promotion.
* Broader use of the conference contact list is planned to further market Groton and the April event.

1. **Website, Media, and Cultural Promotion**

* A proposal to better feature local books and authors on the Destination Groton website was discussed, starting with highlighting Jeff Boutwell’s work.
* Committee members are working on additional content and outreach to potential media partners (Yankee Magazine, CTM Media Group) to promote Groton's cultural assets.
* Ongoing discussions are in place to expand use of social media, historical walking tours, and seasonal campaigns.

1. **Capacity Planning & Long-Term Strategy**

* The committee expressed concern about available bandwidth for additional grant applications or implementation work later in the year.
* Decisions around future MOTT or Rural Development funding opportunities will weigh current workload and strategic value.
* The group reaffirmed that any long-term vision plan should be driven and owned by the committee, with consultant input viewed as support rather than direction.

**Action Items**

* Contact Don Black to confirm the list of planned 250th events and funding needs.
* Update and revise the prior MOTT grant application for 2025 with added detail on event programming.
* Schedule a follow-up interview/meeting with the selected RDF consultant.
* Submit RDF status update by April 9 and aim for draft application completion by May 15.
* Compile and assign mailing list outreach for April 6 event promotion.
* Print and distribute flyers with QR codes to key locations in town and surrounding areas.
* Contact Tim Savoy regarding choir participation and coordinate the $500 contribution.
* Continue outreach to media and tourism partners (Yankee Magazine, CTM, Visit New England).
* Organize photography and social media content for raffle winner visit.
* Improve website content featuring local books and cultural media (e.g., Boutwell's book, NPR interview).