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

**Meeting Date:** April 2, 2025

**Attendees:**

* **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker-Roach, Brian Bolton, Heather Puksta
* **Sub-Committee member:** Karen Tucker-Barisano
* **Guests:** Tim Hess and Studio InSitu Team

**Meeting Summary:** The meeting focused on coordinating two major efforts: the development of a visionary action plan for revitalizing a walkable town center, and final preparations for a large-scale community event launching the historic audio walking tour. The primary focus of the meeting was to engage with Tim Hess and his consulting team regarding their proposal to create an actionable vision for Groton’s downtown revitalization. The committee emphasized the need to build on existing economic studies, particularly those identifying retail leakage and underutilized development potential. Discussions centered on leveraging overlay district zoning to attract investment, creating a walkable, mixed-use downtown, and addressing infrastructure needs like traffic, parking, and pedestrian access. The group explored strategies to align architectural vision with economic analysis, focusing on ensuring long-term community benefit without compromising the town’s charm. Parallel to the strategic planning conversation, the committee finalized event logistics—confirming walk-throughs, signage, volunteers, and promotion across town organizations and media. The importance of community engagement, clear communication, and ongoing stakeholder involvement was a consistent theme throughout.

**Key topics included:**

* Downtown Groton Vision Plan and Consultant Scope
* Retail Leakage and Economic Development
* Overlay District and Zoning Strategy
* Traffic Flow and Infrastructure Improvements
* Station Avenue and Historic Building Utilization
* Mixed-Use and Residential Development Potential
* Coordination with Engineering Consultant (Stantec)
* Community Engagement and Buy-In
* Planning Board and Town Leadership Alignment
* Historic Walking Tour Event Planning and Promotion

**Key Takeaways**

* A 10-year vision plan is being developed with a dual focus: economic growth and architectural character.
  + Two studies inform the process: an economic engineering study by Stantec and an architectural/economic action plan by Tim Hess's team.
  + Retail leakage reports show an estimated $20–25 million in spending that could be recaptured within Groton’s downtown through targeted development.
  + Overlay zoning offers a strategic path to unlock parcel value and incentivize mixed-use development.
  + Community and stakeholder engagement is critical to successful implementation; public forums and regular updates are planned.
  + Infrastructure improvements such as pedestrian walkways, cobblestone traffic-calming, parking strategy, and buried power lines are being explored.
  + Planning Board support and collaboration with town officials are necessary to advance zoning adjustments.
* A major April event will serve as a public-facing milestone to celebrate Groton's history and future vision; logistics and promotion efforts are well underway.

**Action Items**

* **Lawrence Academy Walk-Through**: Contact Josh and test electronics setup for Sunday walkthrough.
* **Event Script**: Collaborate with Jeff on MC script and speaker bios.
* **Intern Coordination**: Follow up with Rebecca for volunteer interns for event support.
* **Lawn Sign Distribution**: Finalize 10 locations and begin placing signs upon delivery.
* **Flyer Distribution**: Expand flyer placements to Shaw’s, Market Basket, Groton Market, and Council on Aging.
* **First Parish Church Access**: Confirm event use with Cindy and coordinate staffing for pipe & drum group.
* **Consultant Proposal Summary**: Prepare and send recommendation to Mark Haddad following Tim Hess’s meeting.
* **Developer Focus Groups**: Organize sessions to evaluate redevelopment interest and economic viability.
* **Pedestrian Infrastructure Planning**: Research funding opportunities for boardwalks and pedestrian loops.
* **Standing Bi-Weekly Meetings**: Establish recurring meetings to track revitalization progress.
* **Planning Board Outreach**: Re-engage with board members to support overlay guideline updates.
* **Public Forums**: Schedule public events to solicit input and build support for the downtown plan.
* **Grant Application Strategy**: Align deliverables and timelines for both consultant reports (due August 2025).
* **Beverage & Supply Procurement**: For walking tour event, Source water, soda, and supplies from Costco; confirm recycling setup.
* **Media & Press Engagement**: Monitor Lowell Sun and Groton Herald placements; continue online promotion.