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

**Meeting Date:** April 16, 2025

**Attendees:**

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

**Meeting Summary:** This meeting focused on a range of agenda items central to the continued promotion of Groton’s new Audio Walking Tour and broader town revitalization initiatives. Key goals included:

* Reviewing and approving recent expenditures and invoices related to recent events.
* Discussing and finalizing the MOTT grant application, including budget structure, timeline, and marketing strategy.
* Planning additional promotional efforts for the tour, including web, print, and social media channels.
* Preparing for the April 30 joint meeting with Stantec to discuss site preparation and zoning applications.
* Coordinating a unified town calendar of events.
* Exploring longer-term strategies for physical improvements to the town center (e.g., signage, pedestrian infrastructure, traffic calming).
* Discussing new business openings and marketing of local authors and historical figures (e.g., George Boutwell).

**Key topics included:**

* Approval of April 9 meeting minutes
* Budget and expense updates
* QR code subscription billing
* Promotional plans for the walking tour
* Debate over timing of promotional efforts in relation to grant submission
* Finalization of MOTT grant request ($20K with $5K match)
* Event promotion and flyer/poster distribution strategy
* Preparation for Stantec/Studio joint meeting on April 30
* Marketing for Jeffrey Boutwell’s book
* New retail openings and support strategies
* Challenges with event calendar coordination across Groton organizations
* Potential project ideas for site preparation grant (June 4 deadline)
* Discussion of future zoning and infrastructure improvements

**Key Takeaways**

* **Invoices & Expenses Reviewed**
  + Total event expenses to date exceeded $6,000, with ~$2,850 to be reimbursed via the Commissioners of Trusts (lecture fund).
  + Additional costs included refreshments, printed materials (~$650), newspaper ads ($420), and event insurance ($1,700).
* **Walking Tour Promotion Strategy**
  + A coordinated campaign is underway including:
  + Posting to the MOTT website as a historic attraction
  + Publishing articles in the *Groton Herald*
  + Use of Facebook, Instagram, and Groton's own website
  + Town meeting tabling and flyer distribution
  + The committee debated whether early promotion might negatively impact the perception of need in their pending grant application, but consensus moved toward showcasing success to strengthen the case.
* **MOTT Grant Finalization**
  + Application totals $20,000 with a $5,000 local match.
  + Budget includes:
  + $5,500 for social influencer videos
  + $8,000 for marketing in publications (e.g., Yankee Magazine)
  + $3,000 for commemorative event marketing
  + $4,000 for public engagement programming
  + Timeline runs June 2025–June 2026.
* **Site Preparation and Vision Planning**
  + Ideas proposed for One Stop grant (June 4 deadline):
    - Footbridge over Broadmeadow to improve accessibility during flooding
    - Back entrance to Prescott from the rail trail
    - Traffic calming improvements (e.g., speed boxes, three-way stops, signage, lighting)
    - Burying power lines to enhance aesthetic appeal
    - Zoning updates and walkability enhancements discussed as alternatives or supplements to physical site prep.
* **Event Calendar Coordination Issues**
  + Multiple overlapping calendars (Prescott, Visitor Center, Groton Living) are disjointed.
  + A need was identified to streamline and centralize community event promotion.
  + An action item was proposed to reach out to Prescott/Visitor Center for calendar improvements.
* **Retail Growth and Cultural District Planning**
  + A new retail store is opening on Main St.
  + Committee discussed the importance of welcoming new businesses and suggested town-sponsored ribbon-cuttings.
* **Jeffrey Boutwell Book Marketing**
  + The website will be updated to highlight the new book with clearer calls to action and links.
  + A broader “Groton Authors” campaign was discussed for future rollout.
* **MRPC and Federal Grants**
  + The committee noted that MRPC may be able to assist with technical services or serve as a conduit for EDA grants for vision/zoning efforts.
  + Marketing Strategy Prioritized  
    The committee agreed that marketing the audio tour is a higher priority than supporting local events when allocating grant funds. Facebook and social media were seen as more effective than newspaper ads.

**Action Items**

* **Brian**: Post walking tour event to MOTT site.
* **Brian**: Email the QR code subscription invoice.
* **Committee**: Approve final flyer/poster design and submit for print.
* **Committee**: Order 250 flyers from Alpha Graphics ($137.50), distribute at Town Meeting and key locations.
* **Committee**: Prepare materials for April 30 Stantec/Studio joint meeting; clarify expectations for zoning vs. site prep application.
* **Greg (implied)**: Contact Tim Hess and Stantec regarding meeting prep and site preparation feedback.
* **Committee**: Investigate current issues with Visitor Center event calendar and coordinate improvement plan.
* **Committee**: Plan strategy for promoting the George Boutwell book (update homepage, explore local author page).
* **Committee**: Explore funding eligibility via MRPC for technical support or federal grants.
* **Committee**: Evaluate traffic calming ideas and potential zoning tweaks with consultant input.
* **All**: Submit new site preparation or infrastructure ideas in advance of April 30 meeting.