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

**Meeting Date:** April 30, 2025

**Attendees:**

* **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Joni Parker-Roach, Brian Bolton, Heather Puksta
* **Sub-Committee member:** Karen Tucker-Barisano
* **Other guests:** Stantec: Michael Clark, Noah Gordo;; Studio InSitu: Tim Hess, Matthew Killam, Joshua LaLiberte

**Meeting Summary:** This meeting focused on a range of agenda items. Key agenda items included:

**Marketing and Budget Planning**: To review current promotional efforts for Groton’s walking tour and associated town branding efforts, assess the impact of event cancellations (including weather-related), and evaluate how to best allocate remaining FY2025 budget funds.

**Relationship Building and Governance**: To address coordination with the Commemorations & Celebrations Committee for 250th events, and to determine a clear approach for future collaboration.

**Downtown Development and Infrastructure Visioning**: To engage consultants from Stantec and Studio InSitu in presenting economic baseline data, traffic flow analysis, and early development concepts for Station Avenue and downtown Groton. The committee aims to create a long-term action plan with funding sources, zoning strategies, and pedestrian-focused infrastructure to transform Groton’s downtown into a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use district.

**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**

* **Marketing & Budget Updates**
  + A weekend get-away to Groton had to be canceled due to personal conflicts with the winner. A follow-up is planned for fall with Yankee Magazine.
  + The committee reviewed remaining FY2025 funds (~$4,000–$5,000 pending final calculations) and considered:
    - Hiring an influencer for seasonal content
    - Additional advertising and promotion
  + Awaiting results of the Massachusetts 250 grant (due in ~10 days); potential unawarded funds may be reallocated to committee events.
  + Trails and walking tour promotions continue via Facebook, Visitor Center coordination, and newsletter placement.
* **Coordination with the Commemorations & Celebrations Committee**
  + Several members met with Commemoration & Celebrations committee.
  + The DGC concluded that future engagement must be initiated by the Commemorations Committee with detailed, advance planning.
  + A follow-up clarification note will be sent to formalize expectations and responsibilities.
* **Vision & Infrastructure Planning: Traffic + Development**
* The second half of the meeting was a working session with consultants.
  + **Stantec Key Findings:**
    - Traffic Data:
      * ~8,500 vehicles/day on Main Street (with AM/PM peaks).
      * Many vehicles are pass-through (Pepperell to Ayer).
      * Level of Service (LOS) rated C for Main Street, F for side streets like Old Ayer Rd.
    - Pedestrian Issues:
      * Long gaps between crosswalks (~400 ft), creating safety risks.
      * Excessively wide travel lanes (45–50 ft) encourage speeding.
      * Curb cuts are abundant, adding conflict points.
    - Speeding:
      * 20% of vehicles exceed 30 mph; average speeds near 25–27 mph.
      * Members expressed concern that data underrepresents off-peak speeding.
  + **Studio InSitu Vision Elements:**
  + Development Models Reviewed:
  + Traditional 24-unit apartment blocks (not feasible due to parking demands)
    - * "Missing middle" housing models (limited fit)
      * Cottage Court concept (most promising): Shared green space, lower parking needs, community-oriented design.
        + Potential parcels: Lots 4, 5, 63, and Prescott School backyard
    - Zoning & Overlay Concerns:
      * Current overlay district creates friction for development due to special permits and review layers.
      * Suggested rethinking zoning (possibly form-based) and creating a unified “Downtown District” under one review board.
    - Mixed-Use & Parking:
      * Strong support for mixed-use development (residential above retail).
      * Consideration of shared parking solutions and relaxing space minimums.
    - Traffic Flow Solutions:
      * Explore feasibility of roundabouts at key intersections.
      * Prioritize pedestrian-first planning over vehicular speed.
      * Infrastructure Needs:
      * Improved access to Broadmeadow (potential road)
      * Repairs, trail access, stormwater management

**Action Items**

* **Follow-up with Yankee Magazine** for potential fall weekend in Groton scheduling.
* **Crunch final FY2025 budget numbers** with finance office.
* **Discuss allocation of remaining funds**, including influencer contracting or ad buys.
* **Send follow-up note** to the Commemorations & Celebrations Committee outlining relationship process.
* **Conduct detailed analysis** of speeding by time-of-day and off-peak patterns.
* **Evaluate feasibility of a roundabout** at Main St. and Route 40.
* **Investigate examples** of towns that successfully reduced parking minimums.
* **Explore shared parking models** for retail and residential integration.
* **Engage HDC, Conservation Commission**, and others on proposed development strategies.
* **Apply for technical assistance/funding** through the MA Downtown Initiative program.
* **Define parcels for Phase 1 development** and test-fit concepts like Cottage Court.
* **Develop a long-term vision & action plan** (10-year horizon) to attract funding and developer interest.
* **Identify a potential master developer** or framework for coordinating multi-phase growth.
* **Review zoning barriers** in the Town Center Overlay and evaluate form-based code alternatives.