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

**Meeting Date:** May 14, 2025

**Attendees:**

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

**Meeting Summary:** This meeting was held to advance several interrelated initiatives critical to the committee's downtown revitalization and tourism strategy. Key agenda items included:

1. **Infrastructure Visioning** – Continued planning for downtown development, with emphasis on pedestrian and vehicle connectivity between the rail trail, Prescott School, and Station Avenue area.
2. **Site Preparation Grant Planning** – Finalizing the approach to a June 4 One Stop grant application for funding design work on a proposed pedestrian/bike bridge and potential vehicular connection.
3. **Land Use, Zoning, and Parking Strategy** – Evaluating zoning overlays, parking minimums, and shared parking opportunities to support mixed-use, walkable development in Groton’s town center.
4. **Operational and Communication Matters** – Budget reconciliation, newsletter and event planning, central calendar implementation, and preparing for regional tourism events.

**Key topics included:**

1. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

* Minutes from April 23 and May 7 were approved unanimously.

1. **Administrative Updates**

* A $500 budget was confirmed for the centralized event calendar, with Jeff following up on the invoice.
* The committee discussed editing the April 6 lecture video down to one hour for inclusion on the Destination Groton website.
* Committee members were awaiting content from Brian for the spring newsletter.
* Wednesday meeting time was adjusted to 2:00–4:30 PM to accommodate consultant availability.

1. **Budget and Spending Review**

* Current usable funds are estimated at ~$5,000, pending resolution of missing invoices for the April 6 event (notably $1,700 for insurance).
* The committee agreed that funds must be spent in the current fiscal year to maintain eligibility for future grants.
* Planned uses include:
  + $2,500 for influencer content (Elena Pinto)
  + $500 contribution to the Visitor Center
  + Remaining funds to support design work or marketing assets

1. **Downtown Development Vision**

* A significant portion of the meeting focused on refining the committee’s development vision:
  + Emphasis on a **walkable, mixed-use town center**, avoiding dense residential developments like 76-condo proposals.
  + The town’s evolving identity from “bedroom community” to **regional destination** was discussed, especially due to Groton Hill Music’s 80K–200K annual visitors.
  + Past zoning shortfalls and the need for economic development planning were noted.
  + The committee aligned on focusing development that supports public spaces, small businesses, and housing diversity (e.g., “missing middle” housing).

1. **Pedestrian and Vehicular Connectivity**

* The group discussed submitting a **One Stop Grant** request (due June 4) for up to $500,000 for design work on:
  + A **pedestrian/bike bridge** connecting the rail trail to the back of Prescott
  + A **vehicular access road** as a potential future phase
* Site constraints include **wetlands, floodplains, and elevation changes**, requiring expensive and complex design and permitting.
* The design would support long-term connectivity and reduce downtown traffic congestion.

1. **Consultant Presentation and Planning Feedback**

* Studio InSitu shared vision concepts covering:
  + **Traffic calming tools**, such as speed tables, elevated crosswalks, and narrower lane widths (10 ft preferred).
  + **Reduced parking minimums**, including proposals for municipal/shared parking solutions instead of requiring parcel-based minimums.
  + Development models that combine retail, office, and light industrial with housing, preserving Groton’s historic character.
  + Ideas for roundabouts at key intersections (Route 40, Old Ayer Road, Hollis Street) pending feasibility templates from Stantec.
* Consultants stressed balancing infrastructure and walkability with economic development goals, using tools like:
  + **Shared parking incentives**
  + **Pedestrian-first streetscape design**
  + **Strategic zoning updates to attract developers**

1. **Parking, Zoning, and Shared Use Discussions**

* Discussion emphasized:
  + Waivers for current parking minimums are possible but not guaranteed unless codified in zoning changes.
  + Shared parking should be formalized to reduce dependence on private landowner goodwill.
  + Potential reconfiguration of Main Street for more marked on-street parking to slow traffic and boost pedestrian safety.
* A goal was set to balance aesthetics, access, and mobility while maximizing land use.

**Action Items**

* **Jeff** to chase down invoice for $500 central calendar project.
* **Jeff** to follow up on $1,700 insurance invoice for April 6 event.
* **Committee** to confirm final fiscal year budget and allocate funds accordingly.
* **Reach out to Brian** regarding the spring newsletter content and timing.
* **Coordinate with Prescott Board** about potential road/bridge connections behind Prescott.
* **Consult with Takashi and DPW** on wetland impacts and permitting pathways.
* **Studio InSitu/Stantec** to provide roundabout footprint templates for feasibility assessment.
* **Continue grant application** preparation for the June 4 One Stop site preparation grant.
* **Draft or update zoning language** to support reduced parking minimums and shared use policies.
* **Plan formal community input process** to build support for long-term development and site prep efforts.