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

**Meeting Date:** May 21, 2025

**Attendees:**

* **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker-Roach, Brian Bolton, Heather Puksta
* **Sub-Committee member:** Karen Tucker-Barisano
* **Other guests:** Studio InSitu: Tim Hess, Matthew Killam, Joshua LaLiberte

**Meeting Summary:** The committee met to finalize preparations for an important vision plan presentation to the Planning Board, aiming to introduce a collaborative, long-term plan for revitalizing Groton’s Town Center. The session also covered:

* Preparing and rehearsing the Planning Board presentation and aligning on tone, content, and messaging.
* Reviewing the current status of grants, budget, and public engagement activities.
* Discussing enhancements to Groton’s walkability, traffic calming, retail strategy, and destination appeal.
* Planning newsletter content, poster campaigns, and broader public communication efforts related to the walking tour and economic development.
* Setting the upcoming summer schedule and coordination with other town organizations.

1. **Planning Board Presentation Preparation**

* A clear **10-year vision** for a walkable, vibrant Town Center is being introduced to the Planning Board.
* The team emphasized:
  + **Collaboration**: Seeking input rather than approval at this stage.
  + **Flexibility**: The plan remains a work in progress with future public forums.
  + **Economic opportunity**: Capturing retail leakage, boosting hospitality, and increasing tax revenue.
  + **Infrastructure vision**: Including roundabouts, shared parking, new road linkages, and pedestrian/bike connectivity.
  + **Design philosophy**: Emphasizing charm and character while allowing for adaptive uses.
* The presentation will include high-level points, conceptual models (SketchUp), and early renderings of traffic flow, zoning, and redevelopment scenarios.

1. **Zoning and Land Use Strategy**
   * Current zoning is **insufficient** for the development vision. A revised Town Center Overlay or entirely new zoning will be proposed.
   * Changes may include:
     + **Reduced parking minimums**
     + **Greater density allowances**
     + **Encouragement of shared and flexible land use**
     + Avoiding overregulation or the perception of forced displacement.
   * It was noted that encouraging change through **economic incentives** (not mandates) is key.
2. **Roundabouts and Traffic Calming**

* Four potential **roundabout locations** were presented as part of traffic calming and safety enhancements.
* Consultants emphasized the goal of reducing congestion on Main Street and enhancing **circulation and connectivity**.

1. **Downtown Design and Business Strategy**

* The plan balances serving **residents’ everyday needs** and **attracting visitors**.
* Proposals include:
  + Fine dining, boutique retail, and performing arts support.
  + Mixed-use development (residential and commercial blend).
  + Leveraging regional draws like Groton Hill Music and Gibbet Hill.

1. **Communication and Messaging Strategy**

* The team agreed to **frame the plan** as a conceptual vision driven by Destination Groton—not a finalized development scheme.
* Consultants were asked to **pre-set SketchUp views** for the Planning Board presentation to avoid disorientation during the Zoom walkthrough.

**Updates & Other Discussions**

**Public Communication**

* The spring newsletter is in development and will include:
  + Recaps of Grotonfest, Memorial Day Parade, road race, and audio walking tour engagement.
  + Cultural events like Groton Salon, artist receptions, and previews of summer programs.
  + A campaign to promote the walking tour in collaboration with Groton Inn, library, and History Center.
  + Poster distribution and display strategies (including large foam board formats).

**Visitor Center Calendar**

* The committee approved a $500 allocation from the FY budget for the Visitor Center's digital calendar.
* Awaiting the invoice to process this expense in the current fiscal year.

**Budget and Spending**

* The MOTT 2/50 grant announcement is pending (expected in May).
* The committee is tracking several expenses:
  + Insurance (~$1,550)
  + Lawrence Academy invoice (awaited)
  + Marketing content and influencer work
* Estimated remaining budget: ~$5,200

**Sustainability and Transportation**

* The committee discussed reducing vehicle dependency by bringing needed services into walking/biking distance for residents.
* Sustainability goals include:
  + Fewer car trips for residents
  + Infrastructure for biking and pedestrian paths
  + Possible future considerations: charging stations, hydrogen options, green infrastructure

**Action Items**

* Finalize and rehearse Planning Board presentation (assign roles: DGC intro, consultant vision, SketchUp walkthrough).
* Send Tim specific SketchUp view requests (roundabouts, walking trails, key redevelopment areas).
* Distribute the **newsletter** next week after Memorial Day (Brian, Joni, and team to coordinate).
* Collect and edit **Grotonfest and Memorial Day photos** for newsletter inclusion.
* Request newsletter content from Groton Salon, schools, library, and Inn.
* Finalize poster artwork and determine quantity of large-format walking tour signage.
* Follow up with Megan or Julie for the **$500 calendar invoice**.
* Continue grant monitoring for MOTT 2/50 and future tourism-related applications.
* Confirm room availability and finalize summer meeting schedule:
  + Next meeting (May 28): 2–4 PM
  + Beginning June 4: switch to 12–2 PM time slot