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

**Meeting Date:** May 28, 2025

**Attendees:**

* **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker-Roach, Brian Bolton, Heather Puksta
* **Sub-Committee members:** Karen Tucker-Barisano, Judy Romateli, Julie Platt
* **Other guests:** **Studio InSitu**: Tim Hess, Matthew Killam, Joshua LaLiberte; **:** **Stantec:** Michael Clark, Noah Gordon
* **Other guests**: John Amaral

**Meeting Summary:** The meeting focused on debriefing the committee’s recent **Planning Board presentation** of the 10-year Downtown Vision Plan and setting the course for next steps. Key objectives included:

1. **Assessing feedback** from the Planning Board and refining messaging, tone, and strategy to maintain public and stakeholder support.
2. **Evaluating zoning change pathways** and engaging with planning staff and Select Board leadership to determine a strategy for a new Town Center zoning framework.
3. **Preparing grant applications and documentation** for the upcoming June 4 One Stop grant deadline.
4. **Continuing public outreach** through newsletters, the walking tour promotion campaign, and distribution of newly printed marketing materials.
5. **Establishing summer priorities**, including timelines for zoning updates, planning forums, and coordination with other town entities (Select Board, Planning Board, etc.).

**Key Takeaways**

1. **Planning Board Presentation Recap**

* The committee presented its **Downtown Vision Plan** to the Planning Board as a collaborative, long-term planning exercise, not a finalized development proposal.
* Feedback from the Planning Board was generally supportive, but caution was advised regarding:
* The need to differentiate the vision from a formal zoning proposal.
* Balancing growth with existing character and infrastructure limitations.
* Committee members emphasized the **flexibility and exploratory nature** of the plan and reiterated that zoning changes would only follow robust public discussion and input.
* Consultants noted that Planning Board members responded positively to:
  + Mixed-use design strategies
  + The importance of traffic calming
  + Desire for less commercial vacancy
  + Community spaces and a strong civic heart

1. **Zoning Strategy Discussion**

* The current Town Center Overlay District (TCOD) may be too **complex and fragmented** to support the vision; alternatives considered include:
  + **New Town Center Zoning District**: Simpler, more predictable framework
  + Potential adoption of **form-based code principles**
* The committee discussed the importance of **involving the Select Board** early and often to ensure buy-in.
* A timeline was outlined to prepare zoning language and community forums:
  + **Summer 2025**: Consultant and internal work sessions
  + **Fall 2025**: Public vision forums
  + **Fall 2025**: Draft zoning language and board presentations
  + **Fall 2025**: Town Meeting vote goal

1. **One Stop Grant Finalization**

* The committee confirmed the June 4 submission of a grant request to fund:
* Town Center Wayfinding and Branding Consulting Services
* Stantec and Studio InSitu are assisting in finalizing maps and narrative support materials.

1. **Walking Tour Promotion and Public Outreach**

* The committee received and reviewed final printed **posters and foam boards** promoting the audio walking tour.
* Flyers and signage will be distributed at the Groton Inn, History Center, Grotonfest, Prescott, and other public locations.
* Plans were finalized for walking tour promotion to be included in the **upcoming newsletter**, which will also feature:
  + Grotonfest recap
  + Memorial Day events
  + Local authors and historical content
  + Cultural happenings (Groton Salon, art receptions)
* A **Google Ads campaign** for “Visit Groton” and walking tour SEO was discussed as a potential summer initiative.

1. **Budget Status**

* The committee confirmed that **all FY24 funds must be spent by June 30**.
* Known expenditures still pending include:
  + Insurance (~$1,550)
  + Influencer ($2,500)
  + Poster printing (invoice expected)
  + Possibly Groton Inn reservation
  + A small surplus remains and could be used for:
  + Online advertising
  + Consultant hours for grant or zoning prep
  + Miscellaneous printing and design needs

**Action Items**

* Finalize and submit **One Stop grant application** before June 4.
* **Consultants to deliver final maps and graphics** for the grant packet.
* **Schedule summer sessions** with Studio InSitu and planning staff to explore zoning options.
* **Request a joint meeting with the Select Board** to introduce the Downtown Vision Plan and zoning goals.
* **Launch newsletter** the first week of June.
* **Distribute walking tour signage** across targeted public sites.
* **Receive invoices** for any outstanding FY24 expenses and ensure payment before June 30.
* **Develop Google Ads proposal** to support walking tour and town promotion (if funds allow).
* **Begin preparation of a zoning strategy memo** outlining rationale, process, and timeline for fall forums.