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

**Meeting Date:** June 4, 2025

**Attendees:**

* **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Joni Parker-Roach, Brian Bolton

**Meeting Summary:** The meeting on preparation for an upcoming consultant presentation to the Planning Board and broader stakeholders, to discuss project progress related to Groton’s town center vision plan, and to evaluate opportunities for regional branding, tourism alignment, and strategic use of AI to expedite documentation and public engagement materials. The committee is working toward finalizing a vision report in time for the October town meeting and discussed strategies for leveraging new regional branding initiatives and grants to build public awareness, partnerships, and long-term implementation capacity.

**Key Takeaways**

1. **Historic Stone Markers**
* The site of the birthplace of William Prescott has been cleared, revealing historic directional stone markers pointing to Worcester and Boston.
* These stones date back to early walking routes and may warrant historical recognition or a feature article.
* A contrast treatment (e.g., paint) may help make the carvings more visible.
* The group discussed leveraging these markers to add local historical texture to the website and public presentations.
1. **Consultant Planning and “Off Broadway” Presentation Prep**
* A third version of the consultants’ concept will be presented next Wednesday.
* The committee agreed it should be framed as a conceptual “Off Broadway” draft to collect input from committees over the summer.
* Concepts discussed include slowing traffic in the town center, reconfiguring parking, and building new structures.
* Emphasis was placed on clear messaging: everything is conceptual and requires stakeholder feedback before moving forward.
1. **AI as a Strategic Tool for Drafting Reports**
* Committee members discussed using ChatGPT to assist with creating the vision plan, synthesizing prior reports (e.g., walkability, master plan) into a comprehensive draft.
* AI can be used to rapidly produce content (e.g., strategies, cost analyses, timelines) which the committee can then refine and own.
* It was noted that a fully AI-assisted draft could cut preparation time significantly and support a fall town meeting vote.
1. **Fall Town Meeting Timeline**
* Goal: Present the finalized vision report by October and secure town meeting support.
* Upon approval, the Select Board could form an implementation committee tasked with a 10-year rollout.
* Committee members acknowledged they would participate but not lead the execution of the next phase.
1. **Spring/Summer Newsletter and River Festival**
* Final touches on the newsletter are underway; it will go out by Friday ahead of the River Festival on Saturday, June 8.
* The festival and other updates will be captured in the newsletter, which is now being positioned as a spring/summer edition.
1. **Tourism Conference Debrief**
* A member shared learnings from the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) conference.
* Key highlights included:
* Engagement with Kate Fox and other leaders
* Showcase of Groton’s promotional materials (e.g., audio tours, postcards)
* Visibility of Groton materials during the conference
* Shout-out to Groton by a Mass Cultural Council speaker
* Reaffirmed importance of arts and culture in driving tourism
* Groton was noted in some materials (e.g., Groton Hill Music) but is not formally included in regional branding efforts like “Revolutionary Valley.”
1. **Revolutionary Valley Branding Initiative**
* The committee discussed efforts to include Groton in the emerging “Revolutionary Valley” rebranding of the Greater Merrimack Valley.
* Other towns (Lexington, Concord, Acton, Westford) are already part of this effort.
* Committee members expressed a strong interest in joining this group or holding dual membership with both the current North Central group and Revolutionary Valley.
* Strategic historical connections, such as the Lawrence family’s role in the American Industrial Revolution, were discussed as reasons to include Groton.
1. **Political and Tourism Context**
* The group discussed the impact of national political trends on tourism, particularly concerns around reduced international travel.
* Committee members reflected on the need to distinguish Massachusetts as an inclusive, culturally vibrant destination in contrast to national trends.

**Action Items**

* Explore possibility of Groton being included in the *Revolutionary Valley* branding initiative.
* Incorporate insights and content from the Tourism Conference into the vision report.
* Write and publish an article about the historic stone markers on the town website.
* Finalize and distribute the spring/summer newsletter by Friday (before June 8).
* Capture photos and highlights from the June 8 River Festival for future marketing.
* Follow up with MOAC regarding timing of grant announcements for the $30,000 branding grant.
* Prepare for next Wednesday’s consultant presentation; refine conceptual materials.
* Begin using AI to synthesize past plans into the draft vision report.
* Circulate screenshots and slides from the Tourism Conference to the full committee.
* Schedule next working session (tentative options: 2–4 PM or 3–5 PM).