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

**Meeting Date:** July 16, 2025

**Attendees:**

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

**Meeting Summary:** The July 16 meeting centered on public and committee feedback following the first Groton Center Vision Plan presentation. The group reviewed critiques—both constructive and critical—from the public and media, clarified the difference between conceptual planning and development proposals, and planned messaging and outreach for upcoming public forums. Members emphasized the importance of transparency, tone, and unity in communications while reaffirming the town’s opportunity to shape its future thoughtfully and inclusively. Upcoming September events were discussed as a key opportunity to collect community input and refine the vision collaboratively.

**Key Takeaways**

1. **Public and Press Feedback**

* The first presentation was misinterpreted by some as a full-fledged development proposal.
* The **Groton Herald editorial** was seen as adversarial and misleading, contributing to public confusion.
* Concerns arose around the visuals shown—particularly buildings and parking garages—which led some to believe development was imminent.

1. **Tone, Messaging, and Presentation Strategy**

* Members agreed on the need for **calm, confident, and clear language** when describing the process.
* Messaging should start with **"here's what we value as a community"** before discussing land use or infrastructure.
* Future slides should show **current challenges and opportunities** (e.g., dangerous crossings, underutilized space) instead of speculative outcomes.
* Highlight the idea that the **public is shaping the plan**, not reacting to a plan already made.

1. **Committee Communications**

* A short list of agreed-upon **talking points** will be developed and shared across the committee.
* Discussions should repeatedly emphasize that **no decisions have been made**, and the process is **early and participatory**.

1. **Engagement Strategy and Upcoming Events**

* A **Visioning Workshop** is being planned for **September**, where residents will be invited to explore ideas and give feedback at activity tables.
* Members discussed ways to make the event **accessible and welcoming**, including:
  + Topic-based tables (housing, traffic, economic development, culture, etc.)
  + Engaging youth and school communities
  + Visual boards showing “then and now” or aspirational comparisons
* The committee plans to maintain momentum and respond to early controversy with **transparency, professionalism, and humility**.

1. **Next Steps**

* Refine the format and tone of upcoming public events.
* Begin **educational outreach** to clarify process and intent.
* Finalize schedule and outreach strategy for **September public workshop**.

**Action Items**

* Emphasize that this is **not a development plan**, but a **visioning process** intended to engage the public early.
* Prepare **clearer visual slides** and remove speculative renderings (e.g., buildings and parking garages) that are being misinterpreted as fixed proposals.
* **Clarify talking points** for committee members and presenters to ensure consistent, measured, and positive messaging.
* Draft and publish a **FAQs or myth-busting sheet** addressing public misconceptions (e.g., “Is a developer already selected?”).
* Reframe future presentations to focus more on **community goals** (e.g., walkability, affordability, vibrancy) rather than physical design first.
* Plan for **September community workshops** to be more interactive, gathering feedback through topic-based tables or group exercises.
* Reach out to **younger residents, Groton School, and Lawrence Academy** to participate in feedback efforts.
* Keep **Select Board and Planning Board engaged and informed** with process updates and tone setting.