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

**Meeting Date:** July 30, 2025

**Attendees:**

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

**Meeting Summary:** The July 30 meeting focused on preparing for the next phase of the Visioning Process by addressing communication challenges, refining public messaging, and planning for September engagement sessions. The committee discussed how to better explain the distinction between aspirational visioning and concrete development plans, especially in light of recent community misunderstandings and media mischaracterizations. Members worked toward developing a clearer communications framework, more accessible and neutral presentation visuals, and a series of interactive workshops designed to increase resident participation. Additional topics included survey updates, grant opportunities, and community partnerships.

**Key Takeaways**

1. **Clarifying the Visioning Process**

* Committee members reaffirmed that the Vision Plan is an exploratory planning tool—not a development proposal. Concern was expressed that the term “Vision Plan” is being misinterpreted as a fixed set of changes rather than a vehicle for gathering community input. The group agreed to shift toward more open language like “visioning process” or “visioning exercise” in public-facing materials. There was consensus that a clear, concise explanation of the process is needed across platforms to prevent further miscommunication.

1. **Slide & Visual Revisions**

* Recent feedback showed that presentation visuals—particularly speculative renderings of buildings and parking garages—are being misread as real proposals. Members agreed these should either be removed or heavily caveated in future sessions. Simpler, annotated graphics (e.g., maps showing sidewalks, pedestrian flow, or existing conditions) were preferred. There was strong support for visuals that emphasize current opportunities and challenges over imagined build-outs.

1. **Communications Toolkit & Consistent Messaging**

* The committee plans to prepare a shared toolkit with core talking points, a FAQ document, and template responses for email or social media inquiries. The goal is to ensure that all committee members and partners are aligned when speaking with the public. Messaging should consistently reinforce that the process is early-stage, participatory, and values-driven—not prescriptive.

1. **September Community Workshops**

* The group continued planning for public engagement in September. The format will center around interactive topic-based tables (e.g., housing, traffic, culture), with committee members or volunteers facilitating each area. Three workshop sessions are tentatively planned, including a Sunday option to increase accessibility. There was discussion about creating handouts or explainer boards to help guide discussions and ensure clarity of purpose.

1. **Survey Strategy**

* Heather reviewed edits to the second public survey. Key improvements include:
  + Removing context that might bias responses.
  + Reframing questions to focus on resident values and needs (not specific solutions like roundabouts).
  + Adding an optional contact field for follow-up while allowing anonymous feedback.
  + Members agreed these changes would help improve the credibility and usefulness of the survey results.

1. **Press Relations & Public Perception**

* There was strong frustration with recent Groton Herald coverage, which several members described as inaccurate and inflammatory. Greg will reach out to the editor directly to request corrections and offer clarification. The committee also discussed writing a letter to the editor or public response to help reset the narrative and reinforce the transparency of the process.

1. **Grants & Revolutionary War Projects**

* The Society of Cincinnati grant (due mid-September) was discussed as a strong fit for several ideas tied to Groton’s Revolutionary War history, including:
  + A marker for the gravesite of 13 men who died at Bunker Hill
  + A living history weekend
  + Public lectures or curriculum development
  + A heritage trail or interpretive signage
  + A fiscal sponsor may be needed if the GBA’s 501(c)(3) status is not yet finalized. Friends of Prescott was mentioned as a possible partner.

1. **Merchandise & Marketing Ideas**

* The group revisited ideas for Destination Groton-themed merchandise (shirts, hats, etc.) as a way to raise visibility and promote community identity. QR code ordering through local businesses was suggested.
* There was also interest in bringing in a high school intern to help with social media marketing and outreach.