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

**Meeting Date:** August 6, 2025

**Attendees:**

* **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker-Roach (via Zoom), Brian Bolton, Heather Puksta
* **Guest:** Professor Zenia Kotval, Michigan State University (via Zoom)

**Meeting Summary:** The August 6 meeting was anchored by a detailed presentation from **Professor Zenia Kotval** of Michigan State University on the economic impact of potential developments and investments in Groton. Her report analyzed the town’s estimated $60 million annual market leakage—the amount residents spend outside of Groton—and modeled scenarios for capturing a share of that spending locally. Using conservative estimates, she projected that capturing 30% of the leakage could produce $91 million in total economic output and create 349 jobs in the region. The presentation also addressed property tax impacts, business attraction potential, and the substantial economic role of the Groton Hill Music Center. Following the presentation, the committee discussed implications for economic development strategy, along with updates on October 11 event logistics, tourism promotion opportunities, and communications strategies to counter misinformation. Additional topics included grant applications, annual tourism conference ideas, and recognition initiatives such as the Scenic America contest.

**Key Takeaways**

1. **Economic Impact Report – Prof. Zenia Kotval**

* **Market Leakage Analysis**
  + Groton loses an estimated **$60 million annually** to spending that occurs outside the town.
  + Capturing 30% of this leakage could generate **$91 million in total economic output** in the region and create **349 jobs**.
  + Potential capture strategies include expanding retail and dining options, enhancing tourism offerings, and improving town center accessibility.
* **Property Tax Revenue Projections**
  + Based on modeled scenarios, increased commercial activity could add between **$120,000 and $400,000 annually** to Groton’s property tax base.
  + The upper end of projections assumed a higher density of commercial and mixed-use development in key areas.
* **Groton Hill Music Center’s Economic Role**
  + Annual budget estimated at **$10 million**, with **50,000 ticket sales** generating visitor traffic and associated local spending.
  + Potential for **$100,000 annually in direct town revenue** from the venue.
  + Wedding events at the center could contribute an additional **$150,000–$200,000 annually** in local spending.
* **Tourism and Business Development Opportunities**
  + Strong potential to increase visitor spending through lodging, dining, cultural events, and retail.
  + Leveraging Groton Hill and other attractions could make Groton a regional destination, reducing leakage and boosting the local economy.
* **Committee Discussion Highlights**
  + Recognition that the data provides a compelling economic case for pursuing targeted development and business recruitment.
  + Importance of aligning these opportunities with Groton’s character, historic preservation, and community priorities.
  + Agreement to use this data as part of future communications to residents, business leaders, and the media to build support for strategic initiatives.

1. **Event Planning – October 11**

* Potential activities: bike rentals, walking tours, concert.
* Lodging arranged at the Inn for special guests.
* **Budget**: $15K total, $9K remaining after committed expenses.

1. **Tourism & Economic Development Initiatives**

* Concept of hosting an **annual tourism conference** to showcase Groton.
* Engage local businesses in tourism marketing efforts.

1. **Public Relations & Media Strategy**

* Concern over recent inaccurate press coverage.
* Emphasis on proactive, fact-based communications and media engagement.

1. **Grants & Recognition**

* Society of the Cincinnati grant opportunities reviewed; creative ideas from ChatGPT to be considered.
* Scenic America application and local photo contest to boost Groton’s visibility.

**To-Do List**

* **Brian Bolton** – Reach out to author Don Ryan on LinkedIn re: potential collaboration.
* Contact **Phil Francisco** (Planning Board) re: town website updates and economic development promotion.
* Coordinate with **Karen** on Society of the Cincinnati grant application.
* Assess budget/feasibility for hosting an annual tourism conference.
* Follow up with **Kirsta Davey** on Scenic America photo contest.
* Confirm dates with **Lisa** at Groton Hill Music Center for planned events.