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

**Meeting Date:** October 1, 2025

**Attendees:**

* **Committee Members:** Greg Sheldon, Jeff Gordon, Joni Parker-Roach, Brian Bolton (via Teams), Heather Puksta
* **Sub-Committee member:** Karen Tucker-Barisano
* **Other guests:** Tim Hess (Studio InSitu)

**Meeting Summary:** The committee met to finalize preparations for the October 1 Public Visioning Forum and review updated presentation materials from **Stantec** (traffic and safety study) and **StudioInSitu** (zoning and visual modeling). Members discussed strategy, presentation sequencing, and how to frame recent events and public feedback within the broader **Groton Vision Process**.

The meeting also included planning for outreach and logistics related to **GrotonFest follow-up**, **forum attendance**, and the upcoming **Society of the Cincinnati event**.

**Detailed Discussion**

1. **Historic Building on Main Street**

* Jeff reported that a historic Main Street property (“the original grocery/dry goods store”) has gone up for sale.
* The committee expressed hope an “angel investor” might preserve it, possibly mixing retail (ground floor) with residential above.
* John Amaral was mentioned as a potential restorer; interior apartments remain in good condition, though exterior needs stabilization.

1. **Visioning Forum Presentation Prep**

* Three presentations are scheduled: **Stantec (traffic)**, **StudioInSitu (zoning/model)**, and Jeff’s **overview/economic narrative**.
* **Stantec’s video** was edited down to ~20 minutes, focusing on:
  + Speeding and lane-width issues (12 ft lanes more suited to 45–50 mph roads).
  + 60% of traffic through downtown is pass-through (non-local).
  + Recommendations: 10-ft lanes, curb bump-outs, narrower curb cuts, improved crossings, potential roundabouts, and shared rear parking concepts.
  + Implementation could include short-term safety fixes and a long-term corridor redesign.

1. **Studio InSitu Model Updates**

* Tim previewed updates to the Station Avenue and Main Street model:
  + **New visuals:** Pavilion/tower at Station Ave., corner building with hipped roof mirroring Town Hall, adjusted sidewalks (+4 ft), benches, and tree wells moved to street edge.
  + Added **Gibbet Hill topography** and **Belted Galloway cows** for local context.
* Discussion emphasized that these are **conceptual zoning visualizations**, not actual development proposals.

1. **Wetlands and Permitting**

* Debate about feasibility of tower or road crossings near wetlands.
* Tim clarified such projects are **challenging but not impossible**—require Conservation Commission review and demonstration of public benefit.
* Comparable precedent: Concord’s municipal parking lot/wetlands walkway.
* Key takeaway: **“Not a non-starter; requires strong public-benefit case.”**

1. **Forum Logistics and Promotion**

* Only five RSVPs received so far, but emails and social media may drive walk-ins.
* Karen will promote to **Groton Garden Club** (~60 members).
* Discussion about changing the final forum date (Oct. 15) from Wednesday; ultimately decided to **keep it Wednesday, Oct. 15 at Prescott Center**.
* Jeff reported strong interest from **GrotonFest** booth visitors (50–80 people engaged).

1. **Upcoming Events**

* **Don Ryan Book Event (Nov. 2):**
  + Plan to fill Prescott gym (target 300 attendees).
  + Committee will develop a **marketing campaign** highlighting Groton’s Revolutionary history and MA250 tie-in.

1. **Economic Impact Messaging**

* refined the **economic narrative** for the presentation:
  + Estimated property tax impact:
    - 10,000 sq ft = ~$31K annual taxes
    - 20,000 sq ft = ~$62K
    - 37,000 sq ft = ~$117K
  + Fiscal impact study (University of Michigan) shows **net gain of ~$117K** after municipal costs.
  + Emphasis on **three pillars of benefit**:
    - Economic vitality and tax base growth.
    - Traffic safety and pedestrian access.
    - Community connectivity and sense of place.
* Added slide references to prior **surveys, MRPC reports, and public input** to underscore transparency and continuity.

1. **Transparency and Public Engagement**

* Plan to remind forum attendees:
* The Vision Process is built on three years of public input (surveys, forums, MRPC studies).
* All documents are posted at **DestinationGroton.com/vision**, including economic, walkability, and zoning studies.
* Meetings are open to the public: Wednesdays, **12–2 PM**, Groton Town Hall (and via Teams).

**To-Do List**

* Finalize presentation with updated economic slide and forum invite slide (Jeff)
* Email Stantec edited video to Brian (Jeff)
* Resolve audio connection issue at Prescott Center (Jeff)
* Complete model edits and finalize video for forum (Tim).
* Update website with University of Michigan fiscal analysis and Visioning documents (Brian)
* Promote October 8 & 15 forums via email and social media (Brian)
* Send event info to Groton Garden Club list (Karen)