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

**Meeting Date:** October 8, 2025

**Attendees:**

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

**Meeting Summary:** The committee convened to finalize materials for the second Public Visioning Forum and refine how the presentation communicates the town’s 10-Year Economic Vision. Discussion centered on survey results, presentation tone, and expanding community engagement—especially among younger families. Members emphasized keeping the Vision Process community-driven and avoiding the perception of a predetermined plan. Updates were shared on upcoming events (Prescott book signing, media outreach, Stantec report collaboration) and financial status. The group reiterated its charge from the Select Board to balance economic opportunity with small-town preservation and safety improvements in the Town Center.

**Detailed Discussion**

1. **Approval of Minutes & Process Improvement**
* Minutes from **Sept 17, 24** and **Oct 1** approved unanimously.
* Committee agreed to attach a running **To-Do list** in all future agendas to ensure accountability and transparency.
* Brian Bolton will circulate quick post-meeting summaries generated via AI to expedite follow-up.
1. **Updates from Previous Meetings**
* **Stantec Presentation:** Date updated; content added under Mobility.
* **Michigan State Report:** Integrated into overall Vision materials.
* **Rail Trail Report:** Now categorized under Mobility; aligns with Complete Streets coordination.
* Committee praised Stantec’s work but noted the need to simplify visuals and avoid over-engineering concepts that could appear final.
1. **Traffic & Pedestrian Safety**
* Members discussed recent pedestrian incidents and agreed crosswalk visibility and parking enforcement remain major issues.
* **Complete Streets collaboration** to be formalized for shared traffic and mobility solutions.
* Ideas included adding bump-outs, crosswalk restrictions, and “no parking” zones near Salt & Light and Prescott crosswalks.
* Consensus that **pedestrian visibility** is a top priority for the Vision Plan.
1. **Survey Results & Community Participation**
* As of the meeting: **99 survey responses**
* Difficulty finding the survey button on the website noted by multiple residents → color change planned.
* Plan to hand out surveys (and QR links) at public forums and school events to increase representation from parents and families.
* Discussion about adding questions on economic development in other areas (Four Corners, CVS Plaza, West Groton).
* Members agreed questions must be open-ended and non-leading to encourage authentic feedback.
1. **Engaging Younger Families**
* Committee recognized that forum attendance skews older.
* **Ideas proposed:**
	+ Set up a survey table at weekend youth sports fields.
	+ Leverage school district listservs and PTO channels for QR distribution.
	+ Consider brief presentations at PTO or School Committee meetings.
	+ Goal: Ensure the Vision Process reflects the voices of families who represent Groton’s future.
1. **Economic Development & Messaging**
* Robust debate on how to frame economic growth data without overstating financial impact.
* Members agreed to remove specific numbers (e.g., tax revenue projections) and refer audiences to the website for details.
* Clarified that the 37,000 sq ft and 12 new stores figure represents **town-wide potential**, not just Town Center.
* Added language emphasizing incremental, market-driven development: “let’s walk before we run.”
* Objective is to create a walkable Town Center experience that balances traffic safety and small-business vitality.
1. **Presentation Strategy & Public Forums**
* Discussion on tone: Presentations must be “vision and conversation,” not “pitch and plan.”
* The committee decided to streamline the deck: remove redundancies, simplify language, and lead with the Select Board charge.
* Plan for each public forum:
	+ ~60 min presentation (Stantec & Tim Hess videos condensed to ~24 and ~25 min each)
	+ ~60 min open discussion and Q&A
* Greg Sheldon to open each session with context on DGC’s charter and intent to solicit input, not advocate for specific projects.
1. **Groton’s Evolution & Committee Charge**
* Members revisited DGC’s origin: initially formed in response to the opening of **Groton Hill Music Center**, the Groton Inn, and Gibbet Hill’s draw as regional attractions.
* Discussion of how Groton has evolved from a bedroom community to a destination community.
* The committee reaffirmed its **Select Board charge:**
	+ “To engage all town stakeholders through public forums to prepare for increased visitors while preserving Groton’s rural charm.”
* Members agreed to include this language in presentations and public materials to clarify the committee’s mandate.
1. **Marketing & Book Signing Event**
* Confirmed plans for the **Colonel William Prescott book signing** on Nov 2 as part of Groton’s MA250 programming.
* Ads to run in three regional papers; Groton Cable to film event.
* Local school history classes to be invited; flyers and digital promo to include QR links to the Resident Survey.
1. **Finance & Timeline**
* **Grant loss:** $40,000 MOTT confirmed.
* **Marketing budget:** $500–$600 approved for ads and printing.
* **Vision Plan timeline:** Finalize Conceptual Plan by **January 2026**, with public review sessions through December 2025.
* Next steps include consolidating survey data, preparing summary for the Select Board, and outlining final Vision Plan chapters.

**To-Do List**

* **Engagement & Outreach**
	+ Coordinate outreach to Groton-Dunstable School District (PTO and School Committee) to reach younger families.
	+ Distribute survey QR codes and hard copies at all Visioning Forums and community events.
	+ Adjust website survey button color to a brighter orange for better visibility.
* **Presentation & Messaging**
	+ Condense slide deck; remove granular financial data and redundant slides.
	+ Add explicit slide referencing the **Select Board charge** to clarify purpose.
	+ Revise wording to emphasize community input and iterative planning.
	+ Frame the “economic opportunity” slides as *potential* scenarios, not commitments.
	+ Include “Town-wide” clarification for all retail-growth numbers (37,000 sq ft, 12 stores).
* **Events & Media**
	+ Write and distribute a press release for the *Colonel William Prescott* book signing (MA250 event).
	+ Place ads in *Groton Herald*, *Lowell Sun*, and *Fitchburg Gazette*.
	+ Confirm Groton Cable recording and request loaner microphones.
	+ Print 30 additional packets, 20 QR flyers, and 20 mission statement handouts.
* **Finance & Administration**
	+ Review quarterly report and reconcile outstanding finance charges.
	+ Share Google Drive link to Stantec report with committee.
	+ Confirm ad spend ($500–$600) and note the $40,000 grant loss for budget tracking.