

Groton hosts regional tourism conference Leaders call for Fitchburg-to-Lowell partnership



Groton Hill Music Center CEO Lisa Fiorentino presents her organization's mission to the audience at the Groton Regional Tourism Conference at the Groton Inn on Nov. 1, 2023. (Steve Lieman photo)

By **SUBMITTED ARTICLE**

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GROTON — A packed audience from throughout the region attended a conference at the Groton Inn Nov. 1 that focused on positioning the Greater North Central Massachusetts and Nashoba Valley region for increased tourism.

The conference featured a lineup of top state and local leaders, business leaders, the CEO of Groton Hill Music Center, and Congresswoman Lori Trahan as the keynote speaker.

Groton Town Manager Mark Haddad opened the conference by welcoming everyone and recognizing the conference co-sponsors: the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Groton Business Association.

Destination Groton Committee Chair Greg Sheldon outlined his committee's mission: Tell Groton's quintessential New England story and help bring it to life. Goals: Engage all town stakeholders, collaborate with strategic regional partners, and celebrate civic pride. Objectives: Promote Groton's many attractions, increase local tax revenues, and maintain the town's quality of life.

"Together we recognize the region as a hidden gem for tourism growth and stand committed to promoting and preserving its beauty," Sheldon said.

North Central Mass. Chamber President Roy Nascimento presented a series of economic statistics, including:

- Tourism is the largest employment sector in North Central Mass. with 19,000 jobs.
- As many as 16,000 of these jobs are in businesses that would benefit from visitors.
- In calendar year 2022, tourism in North Central Massachusetts accounted for: \$194.6 million in visitor spending (\$185 million domestic spending, \$9.6 million international spending); 1,100 jobs; \$50 million in payroll; \$12 million in state taxes; \$6.27 million in local taxes.

Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism Executive Director Kate Fox commented on the impact of tourism on the state economy:

- Tourism is the third-largest industry in Massachusetts.
- Mass. tourism industry is driving \$24.2 billion in domestic and international spending.
- Supports 131,200 jobs in the state.
- \$5.96 billion in payroll.
- \$1.9 billion in state and local taxes.

"My office recognizes the tremendous potential this region offers, and I will work with you all to realize your vision," Fox said.



Congresswoman Lori Trahan addresses a question from the floor at the Groton Regional Tourism Conference at the Groton Inn on Nov. 1, 2023. (Steve Lieman photo)

Massachusetts Director of Rural Affairs Anne Gobi indicated that while her office is newly established by Gov. Maura Healey, “I am committed to work on economic and community development issues, like tourism and infrastructure challenges that will benefit smaller more rural towns at the state level.”

Plenary speaker Lisa Fiorentino, CEO of Groton Hill Music, stated, “Our region is rich in recreation, nature, arts & culture, education, events, amenities, community, and so much more. Groton Hill is an apex destination, bringing tens of thousands of guests to our region every year. There is economic opportunity in holistically serving these guests. The time for anticipating their needs is now.”

“Collaboration is going to be key as we look toward major events on the horizon — and the tourism opportunities they stand to create for our entire region,” Trahan said.

“I’m excited — excited to be a partner in this work, excited to see what we can do together, and excited to deliver on the bold vision outlined during this conference today,” she added.

Destination Groton Chair Greg Sheldon thanked all the speakers and attendees and closed the conference with the reminder, “There is unity in community,” he said.



At the Groton Regional Tourism Conference, from left: Destination Groton Chair Greg Sheldon, North Central Mass. Chamber of Commerce President Roy Nascimento, Groton Town Manager Mark Haddad, Mass. Office of Travel and Tourism Executive Director Kate Fox, Congresswoman Lori Trahan, Groton Hill Music Center CEO Lisa Fiorentino, state Rep. Margaret Scarsdale, state Sen. John Cronin, Mass. Director of Rural Affairs Anne Gobi, and Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce President Melissa Fetterhoff. (Steve Lieman photo)

The conference was taped by the Groton Channel and can be viewed online at bit.ly/47qAw54.

For further information on Destination Groton, visit destinationgroton.com.

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