

**June 4, 2024**

It's hard to believe that June is finally here, and the busy season has officially begun. We had a great kickoff event last month for Motif No.1 Day in Rockport and our first ever Cape Ann Pride with events scattered across our communities from flag raisings to bowling and dances! Our municipal leaders have also wrapped up the town meetings and elections to round out the annual budgets and governance process for the spring. We had a recent Division Meeting in Essex with conversations on how the town and businesses can work together as well as a listening session with Downtown Gloucester Businesses to hear feedback and address some of their concerns and ideas. Stay tuned for these upcoming Division Meetings in other communities.

*Manchester by the Sea:* Thursday June 13 at 8:30am, Manchester American Legion

*Ipswich:* Friday June 14 at 8am, Ipswich Town Hall

*Rockport:* Monday July 22 at 5:30pm, Rockport Town Hall

I had a busy month with opportunities to attend a variety of workshops and events including Small Business Day on Beacon Hill, a presentation by the North Shore Technology Council and Institution for Saving's Credit for Life. The latter was a great opportunity to volunteer at this annual event for local high schoolers exposing them to real life exercises in financial literacy developed to help address this growing problem in our communities.

Small Business Day on Beacon Hill was an opportunity to hear the perspectives of local organizations and engage on issues affecting the small business community. This meeting was organized by the National Federation of Independent Business with presenters from the Retailers Association of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Restaurant Association, and various elected officials. Important topics like labor, healthcare and unemployment were discussed. Some key issues that were raised are the efforts to raise the minimum wage to \$20 and the tipped minimum wage to \$15, changes to the Paid Sick and PFML Time Off Laws, and extending unemployment benefits to striking workers. The increased use of credit and debit cards was addressed with advocates calling for fees to be passed on to consumers. Massachusetts is one of only 2 states that prohibit businesses from passing these increased fees onto their consumers. In addition, support was expressed for The Act to Promote Downtown Vitality which, if passed, would allocate 5% of online sales in Massachusetts to a fund aimed at improving small business districts in communities across the state. Ultimately, the message was that small businesses are the backbone of our economy and that it's vital to get involved in

**GREATER CAPE ANN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

*Serving Essex, Gloucester, Ipswich, Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Rockport*

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local initiatives. Organizers and elected officials both strongly encouraged businesses to utilize their local chambers to help advocate for their business needs.

The local elections in all four towns were held last month with varying turnouts. Ipswich had the highest number of residents cast their votes at 45%. That was likely due to a contested Select Board race with Chair, Sarah Player, holding her seat and the contentious Ipswich Mills Dam. With the majority of residents voting in favor of removing the dam, the issue will now go before the Select Board for the final decision. Rockport has 2 new Select Board members, Laura Evans and Donald Southard. Both were quickly sworn in and are acclimating to their new roles. Manchester also has a new Select Board member, Jeffrey Delaney, as former Select Board member Becky Jacques opted not to rerun. Essex had the lowest voter turnout for their election with only 8% of residents casting a vote; none of their races were contested. Please take a moment if you can, to congratulate and welcome the new members to their respective roles.

There are some notable meetings and events coming up this month. There will be a public forum in the Brenner Room at the Rockport Public Library on Tuesday June 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:30. Both Senator Tarr and Representative Ferrante will be there offering information on the state's proposed Housing Bond Bill. The City of Gloucester is moving forward on their MBTA zoning compliance. After an informative Q&A was held on May 21<sup>st</sup> for residents, there will be a joint presentation of possible zoning scenarios to the Planning Board and City Council on Thursday June 6<sup>th</sup> at 5pm and another public forum welcoming public feedback at the Kyrouz Auditorium on Wednesday June 12<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Lastly, but certainly not least, this weekend on Saturday June 8<sup>th</sup> marks the long-awaited parade and block party commemorating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D Day.

As always, feel free to reach out with any questions, comments, or concerns or if you'd like additional information on any of the topics I've mentioned.

Happy June!

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