

**May 7, 2024**

Spring has sprung around Greater Cape Ann and May is going to be a busy month! Our municipal leaders are wrapping up the town meetings and looking ahead to the upcoming town elections. Our communities are gearing up for the season and the Chamber is pulling together both new and established events to look forward to; most notably our Spring Tourism Mixer on May 14, Motif No.1 Day on May 18, Business Education and Scholarship Golf Tournament on May 20 and finally Cape Ann Pride from May 31-June 2! [Please visit our events calendar](#) for these and many other community events happening in and around Greater Cape Ann.

Now onto town business. Manchester and Rockport hosted their town meetings last month, both passing their budgetary article items. In Manchester by the Sea, residents overwhelmingly approved the purchase of a portion of the Masonic Building for a long-awaited senior center as well as a feasibility study for a new Essex Elementary School and water and sewer upgrades. After a lengthy debate, Rockport residents approved funding for much needed repairs to the Long Beach Seawall. The four citizens petitions were met with mixed opposition; the most controversial being the approval to restrict gas powered leaf blowers. Essex is holding their Annual Town Meeting on May 6 including zoning bylaw amendments and a petition to bring back the Essex Ricer Race. Lastly, Ipswich will have theirs on May 14 incorporating the controversial by right zoning for a public safety building.

Annual Town Elections are scheduled in all 4 communities during the month of May with several elected positions available. Most incumbents are running unopposed with a few exceptions. Rockport's Select Board member Herman Lilja is facing opposition from 2 residents, Laura Evans and Donald Southard, with Select Board Chair, Sarah Wilkinson, opting out of reelection. Ipswich Select Board Chair, Sarah Player, is also facing a challenge from resident Joanne Soffron. The other notable ballot item is the controversial fate of the Ipswich River Dam. Here are all the upcoming town election dates:

Rockport – May 7

Essex – May 13

Manchester by the Sea – May 21

Ipswich – May 21

In other collective news, Rockport is the first Cape Ann community to approve the town's MBTA zoning under the state's 40A 3A Zoning Act, despite a recent lawsuit filed against the town and state by a handful of local residents. Many in our other communities are anxious to see how this and other lawsuits play out as a handful of municipalities have joined Milton in rejecting the state's zoning mandate. Ipswich will host another Community meeting for their 3A Multifamily Zoning Project on Tuesday May 7 and continue to gather feedback for their proposal through a town wide survey May 7- June 7. Manchester's MBTA Zoning Task force will also be holding a public forum on Thursday May 23

**GREATER CAPE ANN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

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

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Gloucester's budget has been front and center as of late with necessary cuts slated for the fiscal 24/25 school year. With the rising cost of special education tuition and transportation plaguing the district, The City was able to find additional funding to reduce the School Committee's budgetary gap from 6 Million to roughly 2 Million. Additional public meetings will take place this month before the final presentation to the City Council's Budget and Finance Committee. The City also encountered an unfortunate incident at a recent City Council meeting from an individual apparently mis-identifying himself as a resident. This person called in virtually during oral communications going on a diatribe spouting antisemitic, homophobic, and transphobic rhetoric. Both the Mayor and City Officials have publicly denounced the speech and have resounded their commitment to inclusivity with the recent proclamation endorsing the Working Definition of Antisemitism and promoting the City's annual Pride Flag Raising on May 31<sup>st</sup>, in which the city has agreed to incorporate the updated Intersex Progress Pride Flag.

As always, feel free to reach out with any comments, questions or concerns.

Happy Spring!

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