January 2026 Community Relations Update

As we close out 2025, the Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce reflects on a year focused on strengthening our business community and reinforcing the importance of supporting local. Our Powered by Local campaign spotlighted the vital role local businesses play in sustaining our economy and preserving the unique character of community. In addition, we launched a Small Business Seminar Series designed to provide business owners with practical tools, expert insights, and tangible resources to help navigate day-to-day operational challenges. These programs reinforced the Chamber's commitment to being a trusted partner and advocate for businesses at every stage.

Looking ahead to 2026, the Chamber will work to support the business community through a wide range of initiatives centered on advocacy, education, and connection. We remain focused on providing timely information and representing business interests at the local and state level, while continuing the Small Business Seminar Series with new topics responsive to evolving needs. The Chamber will also continue to emphasize the importance of shopping locally by highlighting businesses across our platforms. Our volunteer-led committees—including the Business Education Collaborative, Businesswomen's Committee, Health and Wellness Committee, IDEA Committee, and Tourism Council—will play a key role in advancing thoughtful discussion and action around workforce development, inclusion, wellness, and regional tourism.

Community events remain a cornerstone of the Chamber's mission to enhance quality of life and strengthen relationships between residents, visitors, and the business community. In 2026, we will again organize and support signature events such as Rockport's Motif No. 1 Day, Gloucester Block Parties, Ipswich Downtown Tuesdays, Manchester's Festival by the Sea, and Essex's ClamFest. In addition, the Chamber will host business-focused events that recognize and support our members, including the Economic Outlook Breakfast, a Tourism Mixer highlighting regional initiatives, Small Business Week celebrations recognizing leaders in each community, monthly Business After Hours networking events, and quarterly division meetings that bring together business owners and municipal leaders.

Other important upcoming dates in our region center around the special election to fill the House seat formerly held by the late Ann Margaret Ferrante. That date has been set for Tuesday, March 31, 2026, with a primary to be held on March 3. With three candidates who've announced their intention to run, the Chamber is planning ahead to organize a Candidate Forum to ensure Cape Ann residents have an opportunity to hear from them directly on issues impacting our region.

Locally, Cape Ann residents and visitors should be aware that work on the Blyman Bridge in Gloucester is underway to make critical repairs ahead of the major reconstruction project planned for 2027. MassDOT announced that there will be one lane of traffic through March and boaters should expect significant marine closures at various times. Although the timing is optimal for such closures, this will have a dramatic effect on local fishermen. Additionally, I had an opportunity to attend a community meeting sponsored by the Cape Ann Climate Coalition, Gloucester Cultural Initiative, and Downtown Neighborhood Association focusing on the future

of the former Shaw's site on Railroad Ave. Following its closure several months ago, there has been significant concern about potential development and the creation of a food desert in downtown. The discussion and presentation explored collaborative visions for redevelopment of the property and was informed by a Virginia-based community group that successfully spearheaded and funded a major community development project, offering valuable insights into potential paths forward.

As we move into 2026, the Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce remains committed to fostering a strong, resilient business community while enhancing the quality of life across all five greater Cape Ann communities. Through advocacy, collaboration, education, and connection, we will continue to work alongside our members, municipal partners, and community organizations to support local businesses and ensure greater Cape Ann remains a vibrant place to live, work, and visit.

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

Sincerely,

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