

Community Relations Update: September 3, 2024

September is admittedly one of my favorite months on Cape Ann! That being said, it's hard to believe it's upon us as our local schools resume classes and municipalities shift their focus to fall events and projects. One focus is the preparation for annual town meetings. Dates have been set and local Select Boards have been hard at work preparing the warrants. All towns will have the articles posted on their respective websites in advance of the scheduled meetings.

Rockport: Monday September 9th

Ipswich: Tuesday October 22nd

Essex: Monday November 18th

Manchester by the Sea: Monday November 18th

Our local lobster industry has been impacted by recent federal rulings, including a commitment for a \$7 Million grant to support ropeless gear as well as a ruling reducing the minimum catch size of lobsters by 1/16th of an inch to take effect July 2025. Although the change is minimal, the controversial ruling brought about significant push back from lobstermen claiming it will create a detrimental impact on the industry with competition from Canada's more relaxed regulations. At the state level, there has been significant criticism of the legislature for leaving several bills unpassed before they convened for the summer. One such measure was the Economic Development Bill, which has spurred the Massachusetts Chamber Policy Network to submit a letter urging them to reconvene to address its key initiatives. Along those same lines, a recent poll by the MassINC for Transportation for Massachusetts found that 1 in 5 residents see themselves leaving the state within 5 years due to housing costs. Cape Ann, with our coastal seasonal communities, is one such area directly affected by these labor issues.

With the year end deadline fast approaching for compliance with the state's 3A MBTA Communities Act, our municipal leaders have been continuing their re-zoning efforts. With Manchester's proposal still being reviewed by the state, the town has secured a grant to study the propensity for housing development in the area. In Ipswich, despite concerns and criticism from residents with the town's Planning Director position still vacant, the 3A Task Force is moving forward with its proposed Overlay District and will be holding a community forum on September 25th. Gloucester held its most recent forum on August 21st with 2 more public hearings scheduled for September 11th and 26th to allow feedback on the current district draft proposal.

Essex has been working on replacements for key town positions. A new town clerk, Holly Dash, was recently appointed to fill that vacancy and they are actively interviewing candidates to replace Chief Francis who is due to retire next year. The town administrator has also been tracking progress for the major Essex River Dredging Project reporting that it's moving forward with the Army Corp of Engineers currently reviewing 3 bids they received for the project and the Harbormaster has secured a contractor to remove marina moorings in the area. Meanwhile, Rockport's officials have made some recent

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somewhat controversial decisions. One of which was the challenge to 88 voter registrations for seasonal residences on Long Beach and Old County Road leading to the removal of 63 active voters from the list. Additionally, the Select Board voted unanimously to consider limiting plowing on private roads in the town.

The City of Gloucester is seeking resident input for the use of Opioid Settlement funds. An online [survey](#) is currently available to collect feedback on how to best mitigate the epidemic in the city. The City Council has also been busy reviewing various directives. They have renewed the lease at the Isabel Babson Parking Lot located at 20 Rogers St re-securing the 10 spaces for municipal parking spots. They also unanimously authorized the proclamation for National Women's Equality Day on August 26th and most notably voted to pass a short-term rental ordinance which will place various limitations on rentals throughout the city and require them to be registered with the state. In Manchester, the Planning Board has been conducting regular hearings for the Cell Signaling Technologies project. With the board reviewing several conditions, the finance committee concluded the project's potential revenue for the town of up to \$730K annually for the first few years with significant additional revenue expected for phase 2. The town is also reviewing several other upcoming projects including a prospective new home for the DPW at the old compost site and a partnership with CATA for expanded senior ride services. Finally, review for the Reed Park and Morse Pier Floating Dock expansions are progressing with the Planning Board and a vote is expected for Reed at the upcoming meeting on September 9th.

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

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