November 2025 Community Relations Update

As we move into November, the Greater Cape Ann Chamber is keeping a close eye on community developments while also shifting into the festive season. Across all five of our communities, holiday celebrations are being planned with shopping nights and special events that bring residents and visitors together to enjoy local businesses, traditions, and the spirit of greater Cape Ann.

This month also brings pivotal moments in local government, particularly in Gloucester, where voters will elect a new Mayor, City Councilors, and School Committee members on November 4. These elections will set the tone for the city's leadership and priorities in the coming years. We encourage all residents and business owners to stay informed and make their voices heard at the polls. Voters can find information about candidates through responses they submitted to the chamber inviting them to share their plans and views around key issues as well as watch recordings of a variety of debates sponsored by community organizations.

Beyond Gloucester, several key updates are shaping the region's business landscape. The Rockport Select Board voted to maintain a flat tax rate for both residents and businesses. They are also exploring the possibility of implementing new fees for short-term rental properties as well as reviewing local signage rules. The town's Government and Bylaw Committee will hold a public meeting on November 10 to gather input and address the current zoning around signage for permitting and enforcement—particularly with the increased use of sandwich boards on Bearskin Neck.

In Manchester-by-the-Sea, the Planning Board continues to work on a proposed Downtown Zoning District that could influence future development and local commerce. While they explore the potential boundaries of a district as well as other guidelines, they're inviting residents on a walking tour on November 8 at 10 AM. This will be followed by a public forum on November 20 at 6:30 PM at Town Hall and via Zoom to gather feedback on the district's design and requirements.

Ipswich is engaging residents on multiple fronts, including holding a Shellfish Community Stakeholder Listening Session on Wednesday November 5 at 7pm at Town Hall. They are also continuing to invite community discussions on the design of the proposed Public Safety Building. The next meeting will take place on Monday, November 10 at 6 PM in the Resource Room, offering a chance for residents to help shape this important civic investment.

Essex leaders are evaluating options for the new tennis courts at Shepard Memorial Park, with costs now potentially reaching upwards of $1 million due to site conditions and environmental concerns. During our recent quarterly meeting, the Chamber and Town representatives discussed planning a downtown visioning session to gather input from local businesses on revitalization efforts and strategies to promote the downtown area. We will reconvene after the holidays to plan the forum for early spring.

Additionally, the Great Marsh Brewing Company property is currently up for auction, with bidding set to close November 5, leaving the brewery's future dependent on the outcome.

Finally, Gloucester has seen notable personnel updates. Police Chief Ed Connolly has announced his retirement effective January 3, 2026. The City has appointed Emily Sloane as its new Economic Development Coordinator, filling a vital position that has been empty for over 2 years. She is focusing on several initiatives, including the proposed Business Improvement District and plans for the I4C2/65 Rogers Street parcel. Additionally, Kansas Ricci-Munn has been hired to fill a new position as Operations Manager for Beaches and Parks—an important role as the city continues to balance public access, tourism, and preservation.

With a focus on our small business community, the chamber is continuing its seminar series. Next up is Marketing, offering key strategies to improve your brand and business's reach. Registration is available on our website, free for members and $10 for nonmembers. Stay tuned for more details. Regionally, small businesses may also want to tune in to an upcoming NFIB webinar on November 5 at 12 PM, designed to help employers navigate new federal tax law changes exempting taxes on tips and overtime. Registration is available here.

As we head into the holidays, the Chamber remains deeply engaged—advocating for business-friendly policies, keeping you informed, and helping ensure the season ahead is vibrant and successful for our local economy. We're grateful to all who continue to show up, speak up, and support the businesses that make Greater Cape Ann thrive.

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

Sincerely,

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