July 2025 Community Relations Update

As we welcome the summer season across Greater Cape Ann, the Chamber is excited to share a variety of updates that reflect the energy, collaboration, and growth happening in our communities. From new business support initiatives to meaningful municipal engagement, there is much to highlight this month.

We're pleased to announce the upcoming launch of a new in-person **Chamber Seminar Series** designed specifically for small businesses. These seminars will cover timely topics and provide practical tools and resources to help local business owners succeed. Additionally, we are in the process of updating our **Member Wellness Benefits** program. This initiative showcases local wellness providers who offer discounted services to Chamber members as well as their employees, supporting both personal well-being and community connection.

Our **Artist/Business Collaboration** pilot is off to a strong start, building bridges between the creative and business communities. This initiative aims to highlight the talents of local artists by providing opportunities for them to display their work in area businesses. We're actively seeking additional businesses interested in participating and helping to bring more art into everyday spaces.

On the municipal side, we've been convening our **Second Quarter Division Meetings**, providing a platform for community and business leaders to connect and share updates. In **Manchester-by-the-Sea**, the first phase of the new wayfinding signage is now in place, and the town has signed a purchase and sale agreement for a future Senior Center. Fundraising will be the next step, with a feasibility study expected to begin in August and hopes to break ground next year. Manchester also welcomes a new Town Administrator Tony Barletta and reported they were able to secure the expected federal funding for the Central Street Culvert Project, due to begin this fall. Parking enforcement has been strengthened, and there was discussion about expanding parking time limits to 3 hours to accommodate shopper's needs. The recent Downtown Visioning Forum drew strong community participation, and the Planning Board is exploring zoning changes to allow mixed-use development downtown. The Downtown Improvement Committee is also assembling a pitch book to attract new businesses to the area.

In **Rockport**, the new Department of Public Works facility has been completed and they are in the process of moving in, with a ribbon cutting planned for late September. The town experienced a boost in local revenue and positive feedback from the filming of the Apple TV series *Flashlight*. As of July 1, all local ambulance services will transition to Beauport Ambulance, and it's reported that the town's water supply is currently at full capacity with the town and DPW actively working to identify leaks and address infrastructure needs.

Ipswich has seen a number of key developments as well. Interim Town Manager Tom Younger has stepped into his new role and is welcoming collaboration with the Chamber and local business community. Residents recently approved 3A zoning at a Special Town Meeting held on June 16 and a Special Town Election on June 24 overwhelmingly supported a $50 million ballot question to fund the new water treatment plant. Meanwhile, the town is preparing for an August 18 court date regarding the proposed Public Safety building, following the dismissal of most complaints in the lawsuit. If the project moves forward, town leaders will consider how best to reuse the current police and fire stations.

In **Gloucester**, the Board of Health issued a site assignment for the Eastern Waste facility after extensive hearings and with several conditions in place to ensure public safety. The Gloucester Fresh program is being reimagined in partnership with local restaurants to better promote local seafood and the fishing industry. The city also continues to advance its educational offerings, with Gloucester High School's CVTE program launching a Medical Assisting track this fall. On the political front, At-Large Councilor Val Gilman has announced she will not seek re-election, and a preliminary election is tentatively scheduled for September 16 for the 3 candidates now in the mayoral race.

Finally, **Essex** continues to move forward on a variety of fronts. The Board of Selectmen recently appointed Ruth Pereen to the Finance Committee, a decision that sparked debate following the recent bylaw change shifting appointment authority to the Town Moderator. The town also received a $200,000 low-interest loan through the Clean Water Trust's Community Septic Management Program to help fund local septic upgrades. Looking ahead, the Board of Selectmen is working to form a Strategic Planning Committee to guide Essex's priorities in the coming years.

As always, we thank our members, municipal partners, and community stakeholders for your continued engagement. Together, we are building a stronger, more connected Greater Cape Ann. We encourage you to stay involved, reach out with your ideas, and take advantage of the programs and partnerships the Chamber continues to offer.

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

Sincerely,

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