

**April 2, 2024**

As we on Greater Cape Ann step into spring and eagerly await warmer weather, our local municipalities are busy preparing for the Annual Town Meetings. These are the first of two in this governance process, principally held in New England, where residents have an opportunity to engage and vote on issues directly relating to their community. The results of these meetings affect residents and businesses alike. All towns will post their Meeting Warrants, once approved, on their respective websites. We at the Chamber encourage you to stay informed and involved in this important democratic process.

These spring meetings are typically dominated by the town's fiscal budgets. Up first is Rockport, with 2 upcoming meetings; April 6<sup>th</sup> will address fiscal and municipal issues while the second Special meeting, scheduled for April 29<sup>th</sup> will be dedicated to MBTA Zoning articles submitted by the Planning Board. Amongst the warrant items at the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting will be approval of funds to repair the Long Beach Sea Wall, the future of the Old Firehouse Trust Building as well as 4 Citizens Petitions. These petitions, if approved, must still be vetted by the Attorney General's Office. One item of note is an attempt to restrict gas powered leaf blowers. A similar measure was voted down by The Gloucester City Council last year. Next will be Manchester by the Sea, with their meeting scheduled for April 24<sup>th</sup>. This warrant is set to incorporate several special items including a town launch service and acquisition of property for a Senior Center. Also on the agenda will be the feasibility study for construction of a new Essex Elementary School as well as bond funding for sewer and water mitigation.

Essex will have their Annual Town Meeting on May 6<sup>th</sup>. The Planning Board has presented several articles incorporating some of the new definitions and special permit components that will tie into the upcoming Zoning Bylaw revisions. Also on the warrant, will be the Manchester-Essex Regional School District budget as well as approval for funding the Centennial Grove update. Finally, Ipswich will have their annual meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup>. The current draft of the warrant includes voting measures to address zoning bylaws affecting the proposed new Public Safety Building, approval of funding to pay for energy efficient upgrades to municipal buildings as well as appropriation of funds to address various water infrastructure upgrades.

Communities have also been hosting a variety of informational meetings and forums. The City of Gloucester is working on engagement for their Comprehensive Plan and MBTA Zoning. A visioning workshop was held on Saturday March 9<sup>th</sup> with hired consultants, JM Goldson, presenting ACES (the Aggregated Community Engagement Summary) for the City's Comprehensive Plan outreach initiative. The next phase will enlist virtual participation on their project website or attendance at an Open House on May 4<sup>th</sup> at City Hall. You can visit the website for further details- [Gloucester Comprehensive Plan](#). There was also a well-attended workshop on March 25<sup>th</sup> including the City's Planning Director and consultants from RKG Associates, answering questions and spearheading exercises for potential districts

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

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with the MBTA Communities Act. Other upcoming community meetings include a Zoning Bylaw Q&A in Essex on April 11<sup>th</sup> sponsored by the Council on Aging, Community Meeting in Ipswich on May 7<sup>th</sup> for the MBTA Zoning Project and an MBTA Zoning Task Force Public Forum in Manchester on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

In other community updates, the Cell Signaling project presentation is underway before the Manchester Planning Board. It is set to incorporate several phases reviewing all aspects of the proposed building including infrastructure, traffic, and environmental impacts. The Town of Manchester's Downtown Improvement Committee is working with various task forces to make a presentation to the Select Board for the Downtown Improvement Project. These include aspects of the Harbor Plan, lighting, and sidewalk repair as well as Wayfinding. The City of Gloucester has inched forward in its funding for the secondary sewerage treatment project with a \$3 Million federal grant. This extensive project is required to be compliant with the state's Clean Water Acts. Finally, the Town of Essex has been working on the draft for their 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan. Like other communities, they are working with the MAPC and other partners to address climate change and reduce the impact of natural hazards in our coastal areas.

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

Happy Spring!

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