

October 2026 Community Relations Update

Fall is here, and as we welcome the crisp air and cooler nights, our focus remains on both new and returning programming across Greater Cape Ann. One of the Chamber's greatest strengths is our ability to bring people and organizations together, and partnership continues to be at the heart of much of our work. As we finalize logistics for key community events this month and begin looking ahead to the holiday season, we continue collaborating with businesses, schools, municipalities, community organizations, and local and state officials to expand opportunities, strengthen communication, and support our communities.

With the school year now in full swing, we reconvened our Business Education Collaborative, a dedicated group of local businesses committed to working with our schools to enhance students' educational and career experiences. That spirit of collaboration was also on display at the annual Greater Cape Ann College & Career Fair, which we were excited to once again organize in partnership with Gloucester, Ipswich, Rockport, and Manchester Essex high schools. More than 150 colleges and businesses were on hand to provide local students with information and resources about the many pathways available beyond high school. This impactful annual event demonstrates what can be accomplished when our schools and business community work together to build relationships and help prepare Greater Cape Ann's future workforce.

We also released the latest installment of our Your Membership at Work series, Share Your News, highlighting the value of using Chamber resources to share business announcements and updates with the community. Whether announcing a new location, service, ownership change, or other milestone, sharing news through the Chamber is an easy way for members to keep their business visible and extend their reach. The series is designed to help members make the most of their membership, and previous installments are available on our website.

Our advocacy and community outreach efforts took a slightly different form this past month, with collaboration and communication taking center stage. In Gloucester, we partnered with Ward 2 City Councilor Dylan Benson and Discover Gloucester to hold a listening session with downtown businesses, creating an opportunity to share concerns and ideas directly with a local official. Topics ranged from parking and events to marketing and promotion, with an emphasis on improving communication and follow-up between businesses, our organizations, and the City.

In Essex, we partnered with the Town to host a Downtown Visioning Forum. With the makeup of the downtown changing over the past several years, including the closure of several prominent businesses, the forum provided an opportunity for residents and members of the business community to share what they value about the town center, what they feel may be missing, and what they would like to see in its

future. A community survey distributed in advance generated a strong response and helped guide the discussion. The feedback gathered through both the survey and forum gives us a valuable foundation for continued collaboration with the Town, residents, and businesses as we identify and prioritize opportunities for the downtown.

September also brought another successful installment of our Small Business University series. Local longtime business owner Tim Sanborn shared valuable tips and recommendations on increasing the value of a business and planning for its future. We're now preparing for our next program on November 5, when representatives from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development will join us to share information about state programs and resources available to support small businesses. Programs like these allow us to connect our members directly with experts, resources, and partners who can help their businesses grow and handle the day-to-day challenges and needs.

We were also pleased to celebrate two new local businesses with ribbon cuttings. In Manchester-by-the-Sea, we welcomed Renew by the Sea, a new regenerative wellness center focused on holistic pathways to healing. In Essex, we celebrated Ipswich River Craft and its new location, showcasing artistic nautical designs featuring the "secret" nautical alphabet. Ribbon cuttings are always a welcome opportunity to join with community leaders, businesses, friends, and neighbors to celebrate entrepreneurship and introduce new and growing businesses to the Greater Cape Ann community.

Civic engagement was another important area of collaboration this month as we partnered with Ipswich Local News and Hamilton-Wenham News to organize a candidate forum for the Massachusetts House 2nd Essex District. Bringing together community and media partners helps provide voters with opportunities to hear directly from candidates about the issues affecting our region. These forums are an important part of our commitment to civic engagement while also helping ensure that issues important to our communities and business sector are part of the conversation. Strong communication and productive partnerships with our elected officials at all levels help ensure Greater Cape Ann's needs and voices continue to be heard.

As we look ahead to the holiday season, that same collaborative approach will continue as we work with community partners across Greater Cape Ann on holiday programming and promotions that highlight the important role our small businesses play in making our communities vibrant and welcoming. The coming months provide an important opportunity to encourage residents and visitors alike to shop local, support our independent businesses, and keep more of their holiday spending right here in our region. We look forward to working with our partners to help showcase all that Greater Cape Ann has to offer throughout the season.

Please feel free to reach out if you're interested in any of the updates provided here or have any questions or concerns.

GREATER CAPE ANN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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

24 Harbor Loop, Gloucester, MA 01930 ~ 978-283-1601 ~ 978-283-4740 (fax)
capeannchamber.com ~ capeannvacations.com ~ rockportusa.com

Sincerely,

Colleen Murdock
Director of Community Relations
Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce
colleen@capeannchamber.com

GREATER CAPE ANN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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

24 Harbor Loop, Gloucester, MA 01930 ~ 978-283-1601 ~ 978-283-4740 (fax)
capeannchamber.com ~ capeannvacations.com ~ rockportusa.com