June 2025 Community Relations Update

The Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce remains deeply committed to advocating for policies and initiatives that strengthen our local business environment and ensure the long-term vitality of our communities. This month, we submitted letters of support for two strategic grant applications that have direct implications for economic development and business resilience. We endorsed TownGreen's application to the MAPC Accelerated Climate Resilience Grant, which will help fund the Neighborhood Resiliency Project and support the Cape Ann MARCH collaborative. These efforts aim to prepare our region for climate-related disruptions—an issue of growing concern for businesses of all types and sizes. We also supported the City of Gloucester's application to the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Grant, which will help advance the formation of a Business Improvement District (BID). This critical step will focus on engaging key stakeholders in the process. A successful BID strengthens collaboration and advances long-term economic development and sustainability in our downtowns.

In keeping with the mission for our Business Education Collaborative, the Chamber proudly participated in the annual *Credit for Life* Fair at Salem State University, sponsored by Institution for Savings. This interactive event introduces high school students to real-world budgeting and financial decision-making, preparing tomorrow's workforce for financial independence and responsible employment—skills critical to future entrepreneurs and employees alike.

Last month, I attended a presentation hosted in Gloucester by the Federal Funds Infrastructure Office. The session provided valuable guidance on navigating federal grant opportunities and highlighted the growing complexity of securing and maintaining funding. This kind of technical assistance is essential for municipalities and nonprofits—many of which work hand-in-hand with the private sector to drive infrastructure, tourism, and economic development initiatives.

On the community engagement front, the Chamber was proud to help launch *Cape Ann Pride 2025*, a vibrant, inclusive celebration of LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies. As a founding partner of Cape Ann Pride, the Chamber strongly supports the visibility, equity, and success of LGBTQ+-owned businesses and their employees. The festivities continue through next weekend—visit capeannpride.org for more details.

Recent town elections also brought several leadership updates that could shape the business policy landscape in the months ahead. In Manchester, voters re-elected Select Board incumbents Cathy Bilotta and Brian Sollosy, and seated Planning Board members Gordon Brewster, Sandy Bodmer-Turner, and Brian Fey. Essex saw a 36% voter turnout, approving a Proposition 2½ override and the election of Annie Cameron to the Board of Selectmen, which reorganized with Alva Ingaharro as Chair. In Rockport, Dwight Valentine was elected to the Select Board, with Paul Murphy named as the new Chair and Don Southard as Vice Chair.

Ipswich voters returned Select Board members Carl Nylen and Charles Surpitski and approved funding for a new $1.5M fire truck. A Special Town Meeting scheduled for June 16 will address the significant increase in the cost of a proposed water treatment plant and ask voters to repeal the recently approved 3A zoning after a citizen's petition prompted its inclusion on the warrant.

Additional community developments this month include the Gloucester City Council's approval of $1 million in Community Preservation Act funding for 12 projects—many of which support organizations that draw visitors and economic activity to the region, such as the Gloucester Stage Company, Cape Ann Museum, Hammond Castle, and Schooner Adventure. In Manchester, the Planning Board will host a Downtown Visioning Forum on June 9 to gather public input on strategies and elements that would support a more vibrant and accessible downtown. Meanwhile, in Ipswich, Tom Younger was named Interim Town Manager following the resignation of Stephen Crane—a leadership transition that may influence the town's economic planning and infrastructure priorities.

The Chamber will continue to monitor and participate in these important civic conversations and advocate for policies that support a strong and thriving business climate across Greater Cape Ann.

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

Sincerely,

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