

July 2, 2024

The sights and sounds around Greater Cape Ann are indicative of the season in full swing. Gloucester just wrapped up Saint Peter's Fiesta and all our communities are preparing for their annual Fourth of July festivities. Visitors and residents alike are taking advantage of our local amenities, flocking to our many beautiful beaches, boating along our waterways, hiking through the vast array of trails, and enjoying the hydrangeas in full bloom. However, our public safety teams prove it's not all about leisure and enjoyable activities. As coastal communities, we are particularly vulnerable to storms and flooding. As such, public safety teams around Cape Ann recently completed an Emergency Preparedness exercise. This simulation outlined our strengths and weaknesses should a Category 3 hurricane hit our area. An after-action report will be published once it's complete, but the insights and revelations highlighted our need to be more prepared should such a storm hit our area.

In specific communities, Essex is reviewing several aspects that can have a direct effect on businesses. The Planning Board is working through the new potential zoning districts and is seeking public feedback. Residents and businesses are encouraged to complete the Residential Zoning Districts Survey online ([via the Planning Board's website](#)) now through July 8th. The Select Board is also reviewing the permitting process for outdoor seating as the state's alcohol licensing agency, The ABCC, no longer makes determinations on outdoor table service. Local marinas along the Essex River are also awaiting an update to help determine if the Essex River Dredging project can include the areas up to their locations. The Army Corp of Engineers, handling the dredging through the main section of the river, said it wouldn't break up the work into 2 visits. The town is now working with private consultants to determine the potential timeline for side dredging with the goal of requesting an extension of the main project to include those areas.

Manchester by the Sea, with the recent approval of the Select Board, is sending the CHOD Overlay District Zoning By-Law draft to the state for preliminary review. This will help determine if the Planning Board's proposal meets the criteria for the MBTA Communities Zoning law. The State will provide recommendations within 90 days allowing the Planning Board to make any necessary changes before the decision goes on the warrant for the Fall Town Meeting. The recent traffic study that was completed for the proposed Cell Signaling project indicated the likely need for the town's first traffic light at the Route 128 off ramp should the project move ahead as planned. Finally, the Select Board approved the first phase of the town's Wayfinding Project, allocating funds for 6 signs in town welcoming visitors and

directing them towards parking, shops, and dining. However, after much discussion at our recent division meeting, further needs were identified. The Chamber has agreed to step in and is working with the town and local businesses to provide temporary signage with a QR code that will include a map and direction identifying shops, local points of interest, public restrooms, and dining options.

Rockport has been gearing up for its tourist season. The Select Board has once again approved the Outdoor Dining Policy allowing restaurants to submit their request to the town and pay a nominal fee for the additional seating. The construction of the new DPW facility is on budget according to the Director and due to be completed this upcoming December/January, about one month behind schedule. At a recent public forum on housing, approximately 85 people were in attendance, highlighting the concern and relevance of affordable housing in our communities. The discussion surrounded the state's proposed Housing Bond Bill and both Senator Tarr and Representative Ferrante were present.

Wrapping up community updates, Gloucester's City Council approved the city's request in the amount of \$206 Million for the required updates to the sewage treatment plant. The mayor stated they were exploring all repayment options with a goal to not increase the current sewer rate for residents. In good news, the city has also filled the vacant Community Development Director position, welcoming Alex Koppelman to the role. Finally, the Ipswich Select Board, as expected, voted to remove the Ipswich River Dam. Upon rendering the decision, each board member made brief comments reviewing the issue and acknowledging the contentious nature of the decision.

I hope you're all able to take advantage of the numerous activities throughout our area including all the local farmers markets, outdoor music festivals and shows. You can find the full calendar of community events on our website [GCACC Events](#).

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

Wishing everyone a Happy and Safe 4th of July!

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GREATER CAPE ANN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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