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Regional Leaders to Convene for State of Cape Cod Summit Focused on Housing, Environment, Employment, Real Estate, Travel and Business

Virtual summit on May 12th will look towards summer as Cape still grapples with pandemic

April 28, 2021 (Cape Cod, MA) – Regional leaders in housing, the environment, employment, real estate, travel, and business will convene for the second time in less than a year to discuss the State of Cape Cod and the continued impacts the pandemic is having on all sectors of the local economy.

The virtual summit will be held on Wednesday, May 12, 2-3 pm, and be streamed live on Housing Assistance Corporation’s Facebook page and YouTube channel as well as on local cable access channels. The discussion, which will be moderated by Matt Pitta, Director of Communications at The Davenport Companies, will feature Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) Executive Director Andrew Gottlieb, Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce CEO Wendy Northcross, Cape Cod & Islands Association of REALTORS® (CCIAOR) CEO Ryan Castle, Housing Assistance Corporation CEO Alisa Magnotta, and MassHire Cape & Islands Workforce Board Executive Director Kara Galvin.

The contingent, which met virtually for a similar, robust conversation last August, will look ahead towards the summer and what year-round residents and businesses can expect in the coming months. Topics to be covered include preparing for a record travel season on the Cape; the high unemployment rate and the difficulties local businesses are having filling jobs; the booming real estate market; the continued challenges that families, seniors, and our workforce are having finding affordable and attainable housing; the region’s growing need to address its wastewater and water issues; and ways that residents can get involved to help tackle these regional issues.

“The good news is that people can act now by participating at the local level in town meetings and speaking up at their select board, zoning board, and planning board hearings,” Alisa Magnotta said. “In order to solve problems like the region’s housing crisis, we need people to use their voice and let municipal officials know that these issues are important to them. Community support is critical to developing more workforce housing, passing friendlier bylaws that incentivize homeowners to build accessory dwelling units, and adopting zoning changes that allow for housing density in the appropriate locations.”

Housing Assistance is currently working with the Association to Preserve Cape Cod on a two-year study, funded through a \$150,000 grant from the Barnstable County License Plate Grant Program, to identify areas where the development of housing and the protection of priority natural resource areas would be most beneficial.

APCC is a member of the coalition of Cape Cod organizations that included Housing Assistance, the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, and CCIAOR in writing the state's Congressional delegation seeking to secure funding for the region's wastewater infrastructure projects through the \$2.3 trillion infrastructure bill being proposed by President Joseph R. Biden Jr.

"Water quality is essential to everything on Cape Cod," Andrew Gottlieb said. "Existing development patterns have contributed greatly to the degradation of the Cape's environment, marked by sprawl, high prices, and inadequate wastewater treatment. Wise investment in infrastructure with enhanced protection of the natural environment can serve multiple goals at once."

As regional leaders continue to work towards addressing the long-term issues of housing and wastewater, they are also focused on immediate needs. On Cape Cod, the labor market remains problematic; in March, Barnstable County's 9% unemployment rate was the third highest in the state, behind only Dukes County at 10.3% and Nantucket County at 14.8%. Compounding the issue is the hiring woes many businesses are facing, unable to fill positions as they prepare for the summer season.

After more than a year of coping with the pandemic and with vaccinations rising throughout the country, there is a pent-up demand for travel which bodes well for the Cape this summer.

"Cape Cod is facing a perfect storm of high demand from leisure travelers, and low supply of workers to serve those customers," Wendy Northcross said. "How we as a community can adapt to the rapid change in business cycles will be a stimulating discussion on May 12, hopefully bearing fruit for innovative approaches."

As the Cape braces for a travel season unlike any other, real estate continues its ascent as home prices are rising at a record-breaking pace with 43% of all transactions this past March closing above their asking price. By comparison that rate was 11% last March and 9.5% in March of 2019.

"The pandemic has accelerated trend lines that were already happening, but also opened up new opportunities for Cape Cod," Ryan Castle said. "This summer is going to be very good economically for the Cape, but what do the economics in future years look like? That is a big question that we need to be working hard toward."

Panelists will identify current programs available to assist residents and business owners during this time while also offering ways for the public to get involved in addressing the issues facing our region.

Following the individual presentations, the press will be invited to field questions to the panelists. The public can also ask questions via the livestreams on Facebook and YouTube.

About the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC)

Founded in 1968, APCC is the Cape region's leading nonprofit environmental advocacy and education organization, working for the adoption of laws, policies, and programs that protect, preserve, and restore Cape Cod's natural resources. APCC focuses its efforts on the protection of groundwater, surface water, and wetland resources as well as the preservation of open space, the promotion of responsible, planned growth and the achievement of an environmental ethic.

About the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce

The Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce is a membership organization whose mission is to strengthen and promote the regional economic vitality, cultural richness, environmental sensitivity, and social needs of Cape Cod.

About the Cape Cod & Islands Association of REALTORS®

With more than 2,500 members, the Cape Cod & Islands Association of REALTORS® (CCIAOR) is the local organization supporting REALTORS® across Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket by empowering professionalism and advocating for the real estate industry across the region. CCIAOR also owns and operates the Cape Cod & Islands Multiple Listing Service (MLS) and the Martha's Vineyard MLS.

About Housing Assistance Corporation

Housing Assistance is a 47-year-old nonprofit based in Hyannis, whose mission is to ensure that all on Cape Cod and the Islands have a safe, stable place to live. Housing Assistance operates four homeless shelters on Cape Cod; develops affordable housing; oversees Section 8 vouchers for the region; conducts foreclosure counseling; holds educational workshops for first-time homebuyers and those looking to rebuild their credit; and keeps residents in their homes through its homelessness prevention program. To learn more about Housing Assistance programs and services visit www.HAConCapeCod.org.

About MassHire Cape & Islands Workforce Board

MassHire Cape & Islands Workforce Board establishes connections with local employers, educational and community partners throughout the region to ensure the strong alignment of strategic workforce goals and initiatives. The CIWB is a federally-mandated regional organization with local oversight responsibility and policy making authority for federal and state workforce development activities within the region. Our mission is to ensure that the investment in education and training matches the local employers' need for a skilled workforce this is accomplished through strengthening career pathways as well as exposure to work-based learning. Provide all job seekers with quality support services and the potential of training at MassHire Cape & Islands Career Center.

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