

GDT 400th anniversary report (“My View”)

People will generally remember the month of April 2018 for its gloomy weather. When the morning of Saturday, April 28th broke with sunny skies and temperatures in the 60s, all of us on the steering committee for Gloucester’s 400th anniversary celebrations in 2023 had a shared concern: had we picked the wrong day for our first Community Meeting to launch planning for a year-long celebration that our community would long remember?

We were wrong to worry. More than one hundred of your friends and neighbors joined us that afternoon in City Hall’s Kyrourz auditorium, with over forty of them weighing in with their comments and ideas. They gave up two hours of a beautiful spring afternoon to help develop the calendar of a 365-day long celebration, four and a half years away, so it will offer something for everyone who is proud to call Gloucester home.

In voicing their ideas, they all worked under the umbrella of a clearly-defined mission:

Gloucester's 400th will be for local residents to enjoy our timeline of history and heritage and come together to celebrate local life and local businesses. It should not be seen primarily as a promotional or tourism event. If the celebration is well organized and publicized, visitors will be attracted to it naturally and be welcomed to participate.

And they did themselves proud: they proposed a wide array of events and commemorations that fell into three broad categories: maritime events, historical commemorations, and cultural and educational events. Here are some examples:

- Sail Boston fleet visit
- Dorchester, UK vessel visit
- Commemoration of 1606 Champlain visit
- Reflections on the Perfect Storm
- Return of the Cape Ann Festival of the Arts (an annual event during the 1950s)
- Recreate the flakes yard (cod as foundation of settlement)
- Historic reenactments
- Celebration of our history of innovators
- Theatrical events (including a revival of Clayton Stockbridge's prize-winning *Gloucester Story*)
- Musical events
- Cape Ann Symphony events at Stage Fort Park
- Fireworks (at both the beginning and the end of 2023)

As co-chairs of the steering committee, we are excited at the energy and enthusiasm that underlies these ideas and all the others that were discussed that day; for a full listing, please visit our 400th anniversary Facebook page at Gloucester 400 or reach out to us at gloucester400@gmail.com and we’ll send it to you. And don’t worry – the door remains wide open for more ideas and more participation.

But it will take more than good ideas to bring that calendar to life in 2023: it will take the initiative, elbow grease and support of you and your family, friends and neighbors. Gloucester’s spirit of

volunteerism is the key to a successful 400th anniversary celebration in 2023 – if we all work together, we will get this done!

Please stay tuned – we will be providing periodic reports, and more community meetings are going to be conducted. In fact, we have already schedule our second 400th anniversary planning meeting open house, which will occur on October 16th at 6:00 pm in the Rose Baker Senior Center at 6 Manuel F Lewis Street.

All of us who call Gloucester our home have much to be proud of: a rich and diverse heritage, a remarkable way of life in our current day and age, and exciting prospects ahead. Together in 2023, let's celebrate all the people who make our community special on the occasion of Gloucester's 400th birthday.

For the steering committee,

Bob Gillis
Ruth Pino
Bruce Tobey
Co-chairs