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Press Release

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Tarr and Ferrante Secure Passage of Legislation Strengthening the Gloucester Fisheries Commission

Bill Modernizes Vital Advisory Body for America's Oldest Fishing Port

Boston (10/27/2025) – Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R–Gloucester) and Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante (D–Gloucester) have secured the passage of [S.2566, An Act further regulating the Gloucester Fisheries Commission](#) reaffirming the City of Gloucester's long-standing commitment to its historic fishing industry. Tarr and Ferrante filed the bill as a joint home rule petition, [S.2507, An Act establishing the Gloucester Fisheries Commission](#), at the request of Gloucester's Mayor Greg Verga and City Council, which approved the request unanimously. Enacted by the House and Senate on Monday, October 6, 2025, it was officially [signed into law](#) by Governor Maura Healey on Thursday, October 16, 2025.

Established 69 years ago under [Chapter 260 of the Acts of 1956](#), the Gloucester Fisheries Commission ([the Commission](#)) has served as a vital advisory body for nearly seven decades—investigating, advocating for, and recommending measures to promote, preserve, and protect the Gloucester Fishing Industry. As the Commission approaches its 70th anniversary in 2026, this legislation updates its structure and governance to ensure continued effectiveness in an ever-changing economic, regulatory, and environmental context.

“Since its inception, Gloucester's commercial fishing industry has provided an unsurpassed protein resource, supported fishing families, and written chapters in American history,” said **Tarr**. “Now, as the port works to lead with innovation that builds sustainability and environmental stewardship along with prosperity, it needs the forum the commission provides for stakeholders to exchange ideas and build the fisheries policy of the future.”

This legislation formally establishes the Commission as a public body tasked with investigating, advocating for, and recommending measures to promote, preserve, and protect the Gloucester Fishing Industry. It also amends Chapter 260 of the Acts of 1956, defining the commission's status, official seal, and sponsorship by the City of Gloucester.

“For nearly 70 years, the Commission has been central to protecting Gloucester's maritime heritage, and these updates will help it continue that work with renewed purpose and clarity,” added **Tarr**.

“As the daughter of a fisherman, I know firsthand how deeply the fishing industry has shaped Gloucester's families, economy, and identity,” said **Ferrante**. “By updating the Fisheries Commission, we are giving it the ability to adapt to the challenges that didn't exist when it was established in 1956.”

“Gloucester's Fisheries Commission plays a vital role in preserving, promoting, and protecting our fishing industry, which remains a cornerstone of our community and economy,” said **Gloucester Mayor Greg Verga**. “When it became clear that the original legislation was creating challenges for the Commission, I worked with our team to propose a home rule petition to modernize outdated provisions, ensuring the Commission can more effectively meet quorum requirements and continue its important work. I'm grateful to Senator Tarr and Representative Ferrante for filing this legislation on our behalf and remain committed to supporting Gloucester's fishing industry, especially during these challenging and uncertain times.”

Verga worked with his team towards a legislative solution after the Commission expressed challenges around the current language of the law. After partnering on a solution, Verga and **Gloucester General Counsel Suzanne Egan** presented a memorandum for consideration to the Gloucester City Council's [special meeting held by the Ordinance & Administration Committee on January 21, 2025](#).

Egan stated that “the motion before the council was meant to amend the home rule petition that currently existed that had created the Fisheries Commission.” and that “the Fisheries Commission is currently having difficulty meeting a quorum, and reducing the number of committee members from 13 to 7 – two alternative members would allow the Fisheries Commission to properly conduct business.”

After Egan's statement, the Ordinances & Administration Committee voted 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to recommend that the City Council vote to authorize the mayor to petition the General Court for a special act substantially. Gloucester City Council approved the home rule petition at the [January 28, 2025 City Council meeting](#) by a roll call vote (8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent) to authorize the mayor to petition the Massachusetts Legislature which Tarr and Ferrante jointly filed on behalf of the city.

A home rule petition in Massachusetts is a legislative tool that allows a city or town to request special authority from the state legislature to address matters that are normally governed by state law, essentially giving a local government the ability to create laws or make changes that would otherwise require statewide approval.

“I want to thank Senator Bruce Tarr and Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante for their leadership in advancing this important Home Rule legislation for Gloucester,” said **Gloucester City Council President and Councilor-at-Large Tony Gross**.

“The language of the original legislation that created the Fisheries Commission was long overdue for modernization. As the fishing industry continues to evolve and adapt to remain viable, these updates will strengthen the framework that supports Gloucester's working waterfront and ensure that our fishing community remains a vital part of the city's future.”

Highlights of S.2566, *An Act further regulating the Gloucester Fisheries Commission*

- **Defining the Commission's structure:**
 - Composed of a seven-member board
 - One member is the mayor or the mayor's designee
 - Six additional members are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the City Council
 - Appointed members serve staggered three-year terms
 - All board members (including alternates) must be residents with knowledge of the fishing industry
- **Defining the role of the mayor relative to the Commission:**
 - The mayor is authorized to appoint an Executive Director
 - The mayor also determines the Executive Director's compensation

About the Gloucester Fisheries Commission

The mission of the City of Gloucester Fisheries Commission is to investigate, advocate, and recommend measures for the promotion, preservation, and protection of the Gloucester Fishing Industry.

“I would like to thank Senator Tarr, Representative Ferrante, and the entire Legislature for their efforts in passing important updates to the Gloucester Fisheries Commission, said **Al Cottone, the Executive Director of the Commission**. “Their support and commitment to strengthening our local fisheries are greatly appreciated.”

The Gloucester Fisheries Commission meets in person on the third Thursday of each month, with meeting notices and locations posted 48 hours in advance on the City of Gloucester's [Public Meeting Notices](#) page. Meetings are typically held at City Hall in the first floor Conference Room, but location subject to change based on meeting space availability. Recordings of previous virtual meetings are available under [Past Remote Public Meetings](#) on the city's website.

The Commission “welcomes public participation and input as it continues its work to sustain and strengthen the fishing industry that defines Gloucester’s identity as America’s oldest seaport.”

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Additional Resources:

[Chapter 42 of the Acts of 2025](#)

[S.2566, *An Act further regulating the Gloucester Fisheries Commission*](#)

[S.2507, *An Act establishing the Gloucester Fisheries Commission*](#)

[Gloucester Fisheries Commission](#)

[City of Gloucester’s Public Meeting Notices](#)

[Past Remote Public Meetings of the Gloucester Fisheries Commission](#)

[Chapter 260 of the Acts of 1956](#)

[Ordinances & Administration Meeting Minutes – January 21, 2025](#)

[City Council Meeting Minutes – January 28, 2025](#)